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AUTHOR, AUTHOR!

- ★ L. SPRAGUE de CAMP has written some of the sprightliest fantasy and science fiction of the century. His very first story, "The Isolinguals" established the basic traits
- ★ that mark his work: vivid imagination, rigorously worked-out backgrounds, logical scientific extrapolation, broad, earthy humor, and believable heroes. You'll find "The
- ★ Tower of Zanid" proof enough that the old master has increased his skill.

RICHARD H. MACKLIN, Ph. D., is a physicist who has long been a science fiction reader. One day, just in the spirit of fun, he tells us, he wrote us a letter outlining some of the more irritating scientific errors frequently found in science fiction. We sent the letter back, urging him to use this track for a series of articles — and he did!



THE TOWER OF ZANID

Beginning A Four-Part Novel

by L. Sprague de Camp

illustrated by FREAS





Investigating the Safq, Anthony Fallon knew, was very probable death; but his refusal to cooperate would mean certain death — the lingering kind . . .

DR. JULIAN FRED-RO got up from the cot, swayed and steadied himself. The nurse in the dispensary of Novorecife had removed the attach-

ments from him. The lights had stopped flashing and things had stopped going round. Still, he felt a little dizzy. The door opened and Herculeu Castanhoso, the squirrel-like little security officer of the Terran spaceport, came in with a fistful of papers.

"Here you are, Senhor Julian," he said in the Brazilo-Portuguese of the spaceways. "You will find these all in order, but you had better check them to make sure. You have permission to visit Gzashtand, Mikardand, the Free City of Majbur, Qirib, Balhib, Zamba, and all the other friendly Krishnan countries with which we have diplomatic relations."

"Is good," said Fredro.

"I need not caution you about Regulation 368, which forbids you to impart knowledge of Terran science and inventions to natives of H-type planets. The pseudo-hypnosis to which you have just been subjected will effectively prevent your doing so."

"Excuse," said Fredro, speaking Portuguese with a thick Polish accent, "but it seems to me like—what is English expression?—like locking a stable door after cat is out of bag."

Castanhoso shrugged. "What can I do? The leakage occurred before we got artificial pseudo-hypnosis, which was not known until Saint-

Remy's work on Osirian telepathic powers a few decades ago. When my predecessor, Abreu, was security officer, I once went out with him to destroy with our own hands a steamship that an Earthman had built for Ferrian, the Pandr of Sotaspe."

"That must have been exciting."

"Exciting is not the word, Senhor Doctor Julian," said Castanhoso with a vigorous gesture. "But the wonder is that the Krishnans did not learn more: guns, for instance, or engines. Of course some claim that they lack the native originality."

"**A**S I UNDERSTAND, psychological tests do not bear that out."

"A disputed question, senhor. Many Earthmen who know the Krishnans intimately still think they lack this quality, whatever the tests say. Speaking of Prince Ferrian, are you going to Sotaspe? He still rules that island; a very vivid personality."

"No," said Fredro. They had left the dispensary, and Fredro was heading for his quarters to get his gear. "I go in opposite direction, to Balhib."

"So-yes? I wish you a pleasant journey. It is not bad, now that you can go by bishtar-train all the way to Zanid. What do you hope to accomplish in Balhib, if I may ask?"

Fredro's eyes took on a faraway gleam, as of one who after a hard day's struggle sights a distant bottle of whiskey. "I shall solve the mystery of the Safq."

"You mean that colossal artificial snail-shell?" Castanhoso looked worried. "I do not know. It belongs to one of their sects, and they may not like foreigners poking into it. Take care that you do not jeopardize our relations with the Balhibuma."

"Oh, they will not mind when I tell them it is for science. After all, it was I who solved the secrets of Tower of the Gods on Ormazd, and of Vault of Thiang-Yaam on Thor."

"You did?" said Castanhoso politely.

"**C**ERTAINLY. Did you not read my reports in *Zeitschrift für Altertumskunde* and *Przeglad Archeologiczny*? But no, you would not have. Anyway, to solve the Safq would be a fitting climax to my career. After that I shall retire—I am nearly two hundred—and spend my closing years playing with my great-great-great-grandchildren and sneering at work of my younger colleagues. By the way, I understand that Earthmen no longer wear the disguise on Krishna?"

"Not in the countries you will visit. We used to, but that—that Frenchman, what

was his name?—Borel proved that it was not needed. He was killed later, but Earthmen never went back to green wigs and false ears and antennae."

"So?" Fredro made an expansive gesture. "*Obrigado* for your many kindnesses, Senhor Herculeu. I go sight-seeing; you stand here like Dutch boy with a thumb in the mouth."

"You mean with his finger in the dyke. It is discouraging," said Castanhoso, "when one sees that the dyke has already broken through in many other places. The technological blockade might have been successful if it had been applied resolutely right at the start, and if we had had the Saint-Remy treatment then. But you, senhor, will see Krishna in flux. It should be interesting."

"That is why I am here. *Ate a vista*, senhor."

★ ★ ★

IT WAS THE festival of I'Anerik, and the fun-loving folk of Zanid were enjoying their holiday on the dusty plain west of the city.

Across the shallow, muddy Eshqa a space of more than a square hoda had been marked off. In one section, lusty young Krishnans were racing shomals and ayas—either riding the beasts or driving them from chariots, sulkies, buggies, and other

vehicles. In another, platoons of pikemen paraded to the shout of trumpets and the smash of cymbals while Ror-qir—the star Tau Ceti—blazed upon their polished helms. Elsewhere, armored jousts nudged each other off the'r mounts with pronged lances, striking the ground with the clang of a stove dropped from a roof.

On the ball-field, the crowd screamed as Zanid's team of minasht-players beat the diapers off the visiting team from Lussar. King Kir's private band played from a temporary stand that rose amid a sea of booths where you could have your shoes patched, your clothes cleaned, or your hair cut, or buy food, drink, tobacco, jewelry, hats, clothes, walking-sticks, swords, tools, archery equipment, brassware, pottery, medicines (mostly worthless) books, pictures, gods, amulets, potions, seeds, bulbs, lanterns, rugs, furniture, and many other things. Jugglers juggled; acrobats balanced; dancers bounded; actors strutted, and stilt-walkers staggered. Musicians twanged and tootled; singers squalled; poets rhapsodized; story-tellers lied, and fanatics orated. Mountebanks cried up their nostrums; exorcists pursued evil spirits with fireworks; harlots performed in pup-tents barely big enough for them and their clients; mothers rushed shrieking after

their children, and people stood in long lines at the comfort stations.

THE CELEBRANTS included not only Krishnans but also a sprinkling of folk of other worlds: A pair of Osirians, like small bipedal dinosaurs, with their scaly bodies painted in intricate patterns, dashing excitedly from one sight to another; a trio of furry, beady-eyed Thothians, half the height of the Krishnans, trimming the natives at the gambling-games of a dozen worlds; a centaur-like Vishnuvan morosely munching greens from a big leather bag. There was a sober Ormazdian couple, near-human and crested, their carmine skins bare but for sandals and skimpy mantles hanging down their backs; and, of course, a group of trousered Terran tourists with their women, and their cameras in little leather cases. The Interplanetary Council had lifted all bans on taking cameras among the Krishnans, and there was no special danger of unpleasantness from the Balhibuma, because they were all more or less clad.

Here and there you could see an Earthman who had gone Krishnan, swathed from waist to knee in the dhoti-like loin-garment of the land, and wearing a native stocking-cap with its end wound turbanwise about his head. A

few decades before, they would all have disguised themselves by dyeing their hair blue-green, wearing large pointed artificial ears, and gluing to their foreheads a pair of feathery antennae, in imitation of the Krishnans' external organs of smell. These organs were something like extra eyebrows rising from the inner ends of the true eyebrows.

Those days, however, had passed—at least in the lands nearer Novorecife, the spaceport, where Krishnans had become so used to Earthmen as to know them through their makeup and as not to be excited by their presence.

ONE OF THESE Earthmen sauntered about the grounds near the bandstand as if he had nothing on his mind. He wore the usual oversized diaper and a loose striped shirt or tunic wherein several holes had been neatly mended; a plain Krishnan rapier swung at his hip. He was tall for an Earthman—about the average height of a Krishnan, who, through Earthly eyes, seemed a tallish, lean race of humanoids with olive-greenish complexions and flat features like those of the Terran Mongoloid race.

This man, however, was of the white race, with the fair coloring of the Northwestern European, though his uncovered hair, worn nape-length

in Balhibo style, was graying at the sides. In his younger days, he had been outstandingly handsome, with an aggressively aquiline nose; now the bags under the blood-shot eyes and the network of little red veins spoiled the initial impression. The man had not even shaved that day, making himself unnecessarily conspicuous among the beardless Krishnans. If he had never taken the longevity doses with which Terrans tripled their life-span, one would have guessed him to be in his early forties. Actually he was ninety-four Terran years of age.

This man was Anthony Fallon, of London, Great Britain, Earth. For a little while, he had been king of the isle of Zamba in Krishna's Sadabao Sea. Unfortunately, in an excess of ambition, he had attacked the mighty Empire of Gozash-tand with a trainload of followers and two dozen smuggled machine-guns. In so doing he had brought down upon his head the wrath of the Interplanetary Council. The I. C. sought to enforce a technological blockade on Krishna, to keep the warlike but pre-industrial natives of that charming planet from learning the more destructive methods of scientific warfare until they had advanced far enough in politics and culture to make such a revelation safe. Under these cir-

cumstances, of course, a crate of machine-guns was strictly tabu.

As a result Fallon had been snatched from his throne and imprisoned in Gzashtand under a cataleptic trance. This continued for many years, until his second wife, Julnar—who had been forced to return to Earth—came back to Krishna and effected his release. Fallon, free, had tried hard to regain his throne, which had passed back into the control of the Penjirds, a native dynasty which had lost the island in a proletarian revolution not long before Fallon's arrival. Fallon had failed in his comeback, had quarreled with Julnar (who had left him) and now lived in Zanid, the capital of Balhib.

★ ★ ★

FALLON wandered past the prefect's pavilion, from the central pole of which flowed the green-and-black flag of Kir, the Dour of Balhib, straining stiffly in the brisk breeze from the steppes. Below it flapped the special flag of this festival, bearing the dragonlike shan from the equatorial forests of Mutaabwk, on which the demigod 'Anerik was supposed to have ridden into Balhib to spread enlightenment thousands of years ago. Then Fallon headed through the tangle of booths towards the band-

stand, whence wafted faintly over the uproar the strains of a march which a Terran named Schubert had composed over three centuries before.

Schubert was hard put to it to make himself heard over a loud voice with a strong Terran accent. Fallon tracked the orator down and found another Earthman speaking wretched Balhibou with impassioned gestures from atop a box:

"...beware the wrath of the one God! For this God hates iniquity—especially the sins of idolatry, frivolity, and immedesty, to all of which you Balhibuma are subject. Let me save you from the wrath to come! There is no spirit but God, and his prophets are Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Getulio Cao! Repent before it is too late! Destroy the temples of the false gods! Tear down the palaces of sinful pleasure..."

FALLON listened briefly. The speaker was a burly fellow in a black Terran suit, with a nondescript face taut with the tensions of fanaticism, and long black hair escaping from under a snowy turban. He seemed particularly wrought up over the female national dress of Balhib, consisting of a pleated skirt and a shawl pinned about the shoulders with no care to conceal the wearer's

mammality. Fallon recognized the doctrines of the Ecumenical Monotheists, a widespread syncretic sect of Brazilian origin that had gotten its start after world War III on Earth, and which boasted a stricter and more intolerant monotheism than any of the varieties of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from which it derived its doctrines. The Krishnan audience seemed more amused than impressed, which fact drove the preacher to even more frantic efforts.

When tired of repetition, Fallon moved along with a more purposeful air. He was halted by a triumphal procession from the minasht-field, as the partisans of Zanid bore the captain of the local team past upon their shoulders, with his broken arm in a sling. When the sports enthusiasts had gotten out of the way, Fallon walked past a shooting-gallery where Krishnans twanged light crossbows at targets, and stopped before a tent with a sign in Balhibou reading:

TURANJ THE SEER

Astrologer, sryer, necromancer, odontomancer. Sees all, knows all, tells all. Futures foretold; opportunities revealed; dooms averted; lost articles found; courtships planned; enemies exposed. Let me help you!

FALLON put his head into the door of the tent, a large one divided into compartments. In the vestibule a wrinkled Krishnan sat on a hassock smoking a long cigar.

Fallon said in fluent Balhibou: "Hello, Qais old man. What have you committed lately?"

"In Balhib I'm Turanj," replied the Krishnan sharply. "Forget it not, sir!"

"Turanj then. May I enter, O seer?" said Fallon with a sardonic smile.

The Krishnan flicked an ash. "Indeed you may, my my son. Wherefore would you rend the veil?"

Fallon let fall the flap behind him. "You know, sagacious one. If you'll lead the way.."

Turanj grunted, arose, and led Fallon into the main compartment of the tent, where a table stood between two hassocks. Each took a hassock, and Turanj (or Qais of Babaal as he was known in his native Qaath) said: "Well, Antane my chick, what's of interest this time?"

"Let's see some of the filthy first."

"You're as niggardly with your facts as Dakhaq with his gold." Qais produced a bag of coins from nowhere and set it down upon the table with a clink. He untied the draw-string and fingered out a couple of golden ten-kard pieces which he played

with, tossing and catching them and making them appear and disappear.

"Proceed."

FALLON thought, then said: "Kir's worse. He took offense at the beard worn by the envoy of the Republic of Katai-Jhogorai. Compared to Terran whiskers, you could hardly see this beard; but the king ordered the envoy's head off. Embarrassing, what? Especially to the poor envoy. It was all Chabarian could do to hustle the fellow out and send him packing, meanwhile assuring the dour that the victim had been dispatched. Of course, he had been—but in another sense."

Qais chuckled. "Right glad am I that I'm no minister to a king madder than Gedik, who tried to lasso the moons. I regret the fellow's escape; you'd have had a delightfully goresome tale to tell. Why's Kir so tetchy on the harmless-seeming theme of whiskers?"

"Oh, don't you know that story? He once grew one himself—twelve or fourteen whole hairs' worth—and then the Grand Master of the Order of Qarar in Mikardand sent one of his knights on a quest to bag this same beard. It seems that this knight had done in some local bloke, and Kir had been giving Mikardand trouble, so Juvian figured on giving 'em both a les-

son. Well, Sir Shurgez got the beard, and that pushed Kir off the deep end. He'd already been acting eccentric; now he went completely balmy, and has remained in that interesting state ever since."

Qais passed over the two golden coins. "One for the news of Kir's madness, and the other for the tale wherewith you embellished it. The Kamuran will relish it. But proceed."

FALLON thought again. "There's a plot against Kir." He rolled his eyes and drew a finger across his throat.

"There always is."

"This looks like the real thing. There's a chap named Chindor—Chindor er-Qinan, a nephew of one of the rebellious nobles liquidated by Kir when he abolished feudal tenure. He's out to grab the throne from Kir, as *he* claims, from the highest motives."

"They always do," murmured Qais. "Even the giant Damghan in the myth—but proceed."

Fallon shrugged. "He might have pure motives at that; who knows? I once knew an honest man. Anyway, Chindor's backed by one of our new middle-class magnates, Liyara the Brass-founder, the story being that he's promised Liyara a protective tariff against brass-

work from Madhiq in return for his support."

"Another Terran improvement," said Qais. "If the idea spreads much farther, 'twill utterly ruin this planet's trade. What details?"

"None beyond what I've told you. If you make it worth my while I'll dig into it. The more worth, the more dig."

Qais handed over another coin. "Dig, and then shall we decide how much 'tis worth. Aught else?"

"There's some trouble caused by Terran missionaries—Cosmotheists and Monotheists, and the like. The native medicine-men have been stirring up their flocks against them, though Chabarian tries to protect 'em because he's afraid of Novorecife."

Q AIS GRINNED. "The more troubles of this sort, the better for us. Know you the tale of Suria and Dhaukia?"

"No, except that the Jungava have conquered both."

"Well, one of your Terran preachers converted the Dour of Suria to one subdivision of the cult called Christianity, while another persuaded the Kamuran of Dhaukia to embrace another branch of this same faith. Each convinced his convert that salvation lay in exterminating the followers of the other belief, wherefore they fought

each other with destructive fury. By the time Suria won, both were so enfeebled that our General Kugird conquered both with barely a blow, save for the siege of Malayer. 'Tis like the legend of how Tuwazq o'ercame the bishtar and the avval by getting 'em to fight each other."

"Wasn't Kugird himself a Suriau?"

"Aye, wherefore the Suriava slew him as a traitor when he was set over them as governor." Qais giggled. "Served him right for not having effected a fine, juicy massacre of the folk of Malayer."

Fallon grinned in his turn. "Blood and gore all over the floor, and me without my spoon!"

"Eh?"

"A Terran childhood rhyme that I deemed appropriate. But I can see the point of view of the Suriava."

"A foolish prejudice. We Jungava care little for a man's origin, so that he does his task and keeps his word. What else have you?"

FALLON held out his hand palm up and twiddled the fingers. Qais said: "For small news like that, which I knew already, smaller pay."

He dropped a five-kard piece into the palm. Fallon scowled. "O sage, were that disguise never so perfect, yet should I know you by your lack of generosity."

He put away the coin and continued: "The priest of Bakh are campaigning against the cult of Yesht again. The Bakhites accuse the Yeshtites of human sacrifices and such abominations, and claim that it's an outrage that they, the state religion, may not extirpate the worship of the god of darkness. They hope to catch Kir in one of his madder moods and get him to revoke the contract made by his uncle Dalade giving the Yeshtites perpetual use of the Safq."

"Hm," said Qais, handing over another ten-kard piece. "Aught else?"

"Not this time."

"Who built this Safq?"

Fallon performed the Krishnan equivalent of a shrug. "The gods know, if they know anything! It's said to go back before the fall of the Kalwm Empire. I suppose I could dig out more details in the library."

"Have you ever been in the structure?"

"How much of a fool do you take me for? One doesn't stick one's head into the pile unless one's a confirmed Yeshtite—that is, if one wishes to keep one's head. And I rather like mine, you know; got used to the old thing."

"**R**UMORS have come to us of strange things taking place in the Safq," said Qais.

"You mean the Yeshtites

are cutting up as the Bakhites say?"

"Nay, these rumors deal not with matters sacerdotal. What the Yeshtites do I know not. But 'tis said that within that sinister structure, men—if they indeed be such—devise means to the scath and hurt of the Empire of Qaath."

Fallon shrugged.

"Well," said Qais, "if you'd truly make your fortune, find out!"

"You mean *me* to go poking into the Safq?"

"Certes. How much plainer must I make it?"

"After what I just told you? Are you feeling well, my dear old sadist?"

Qais made an impatient motion. "No ropery. Explore the entire edifice; uncover its history and plumb its secrets."

"Not me!" said Fallon. "I may spy for you in order to eat, but I'm not so tired of life as that."

"'Tis worth a thousand karda, a true and complete report upon the Safq. And tell me not you'll ne'er consider it; you'd do anything for gold enough."

"Not for a million karda," said Fallon.

"By the green eyes of Hoi, you shall! The Kamuran insists."

Fallon made a rude and impractical suggestion as to what the mighty Ghuur of

Uriiq, Kamuran of Qaath, might do with his money.

"HARKEN," wheedled Qais. "A thousand'll buy you blades enough to set you back upon the throne of Zamba! Does that tempt you not?"

"Not in the least. A moldy cadaver doesn't care whether it's on a throne or not."

"Be not that the goal for which for many years you've striven, like Qarar moiling at his nine labors?"

"Yes, but hope deferred maketh one skeptical. I wouldn't even consider such a project unless I knew in advance what I was getting into: say if I had a plan of the building and a schedule of the activities in it."

"Why," said Qais, "if I had all that, I'd have no need to hire a Terran creature to snoop for me." He spat upon the floor in annoyance. "You've taken grimmer chances. And here you might see, within the Safq, the most fascinating abominations and tortures—yet you reject the opportunity with scorn and contumely. You Earthmen baffle me betimes. Perchance I could raise the offer by a little. . ."

"To Hishkak with it," snapped Fallon, rising. "How shall I get in touch with you next time?"

"I remain in Zanid for a day or twain. Come to see me at Tashin's Inn."

"Where the players and mountebanks stay?"

"For sure; do I not play the part of such a one?"

"You do it so naturally, maestro!"

"Hmph! But none knows who I really be, so guard your saucy tongue. Farewell!"

Fallon said good-bye and sauntered out into the bright sunshine of Roqir. He mentally added his takings: forty-five karda—enough to support him and Gazi for a few ten-nights. But it was hardly enough to start him on the road back to his throne, the attainment of which remained the one consuming ambition of a nature otherwise far gone in sloth, dissipation, and discouragement.

FALLON knew his own weaknesses well enough to know that if he ever did make the killing for which he hoped, he would have to set about hiring his mercenaries and regaining his throne quickly, for he was one through whose fingers money ran like water. He had made several minor fortunes in his ninety-four years, but he had no more been able to hoard them than one can hoard an ice cream cone on a hot summer day. He would dearly love the thousand karda of which Qais had spoken, but asking him to invade the Safq was just too much. Others had tried it and had al-

ways come to mysterious ends. In his younger and more reckless days, Anthony Fallon might have chanced it; but not now.

He stopped at a drink-shop and bought a bottle of kvad, Krishna's strongest liquor, something like diluted vodka as to taste. Like most Earthmen on Krishna, he preferred the plain stuff to the highly-spiced varieties favored by most Krishnans. The taste mattered little to him; he drank to forget his disappointments. When he and Gazi were drunk together, they did not quarrel; in fact, they became positively affectionate, as in the early days of their intimacy.

"Oh, Fallon!" said a sharp, incisive voice.

Fallon turned. His first fear was justified. Behind him stood another Earthman: tall lean, black-skinned, and frizz-haired. Instead of a Balhibo diaper, he wore a fresh Terran suit. In every way but stature he posed a sharp contrast to Fallon with his crisp voice, his precise gestures, and his alert manner. He bore the air of a natural leader fully aware of his own superiority. He was Percy Mjipa, consul for the Terran World Federation at Zanid.

FALLON composed his features into a noncommittal blank. For a number of reasons, he did not like Percy Mjipa and could not bend

himself to smile hypocritically at the consul. On the other hand, neither was Fallon so rash as to antagonize the official source of longevity-doses for Terrans in Balhib, and their refuge and champion when they got into trouble. He said: "Hello, Mr. Mjipa."

"What are you doing today?" Mjipa spoke English fluently but with the staccato, resonant accent of the cultured Bantu.

"Eating a lotus, old man; just eating a lotus."

"Would you mind stepping over to the prefectural pavilion with me? There's a man I should like you to meet."

Mystified, Fallon followed Mjipa. He knew perfectly well that he was not the sort of person whom Mjipa would exhibit with pride to a visiting dignitary as an example of an Earthman making good on Krishna. Mjipa not only scorned Fallon's Falstaffian personal habits; he also disapproved of being intimate with Krishnans on general principles.

They passed the drill-field, where a company of the Civic Guard of Zanid was parading: platoons of pikemen and arbalestiers. These were a little ragged in their marching, lacking the polish of Kir's professionals; but they made a brave showing in their scarlet tunics under shirts of blackened ring-mail.

MJIPA LOOKED narrowly at Fallon. "I thought you were in the Guard too?"

"I am; in fact, I'm on patrol tonight. With cat-like tread."

"Then why aren't you out there parading?"

Fallon grinned. "I'm in the Juru Company, which is about half non-Krishnans. Can't you imagine Krishnans, Terrans, Osirians, Thothians, and the rest all lined up for a parade?"

"The thought is a bit staggering; something out of a delirium tremens or a TV horror-show."

"And what would you do with that eight-legged Isidian we've got?"

"I suppose you could let him carry a guidon," said Mjipa, and passed on. They came within range of the Terran missionary, still ranting.

"Who's he?" asked Fallon. "He seems to hate everything."

"His name is Wagner; Welcome Wagner. American, I believe, and an Ecumenical Monotheist."

"America's gift to interplanetary misunderstanding, eh?"

"You might say so. The odd thing is, he's a reformed adventurer. His name is really Daniel Wagner; as Dismal Dan he was notorious around the Cetic planets as a worse swindler than Borel and Ko-

shay put together. A man of no culture."

"What happened to him? Get thrown in pokey?"

"Exactly, and got religion—as the Americans say—while brooding on his sins in the Novorecife jail. As soon as he got out, the E. M.'s, having no missionaries in the West, signed him on. But now he's a bigger nuisance than ever." A worried shadow flickered across the dark face. "Those fellows give me a worse headache than simple crooks like you."

"Crooks like me?" Fallon raised his eyebrows as high as they would go and said in the tone that a bishop might use if accused of pilfering the poor-box: "My dear Percy, you wound me, and what's more you wrong me. I've never in my life."

"Oh, come on, come on; I know all about you. Or at least," corrected the meticulous Mjipa, "more than you think I do."

THEY CAME to the big banner-decked tent. The African crisply acknowledged the salutes of the halberdiers who guarded the entrance to the pavilion, and strode in. Fallon followed him through a tangle of passages to a room that had been set aside for the consul's use during the festival. There sat a stocky, squarish, wrinkled man with bristling short-cut white hair, a snub nose, wide cheek-

bones, innocent-looking blue eyes, and a white mustache and goatee. He was carelessly dressed in Terran traveling-clothes. As they entered, this man stood up and took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Dr. Fredro," said Mjipa, "here's your man. His name is Anthony Fallon. Fallon, this is Dr. Julian Fredro."

"Thank you," Fredro murmured in acknowledgement, head slightly bowed and eyes shifting as if with embarrassment or shyness. Mjipa continued:

"Dr. Fredro's here for some archeological research, and while he's about it, he's taking in all the sights. He is the most indefatigable sight-seer I've yet experienced."

Fredro made a self-deprecating motion, saying in Slavic-accented English: "Mr. Mjipa exaggerates, Mr. Fallon. I find Krishna interesting place, that is all. So I try to make hay while cat is away."

"He's run my legs off," sighed Mjipa.

"OH, NOT REALLY," said Fredro. "I like to learn language of countries I visit, and mix with people. I am studying the language now. As for people—ah—Mr. Fallon, do you know any Balhibo philosophers or wise-men in Zanid? Mr. Mjipa has introduced me to soldiers, noble men, merchants, and

workers, but no intellectuals."

"I'm afraid not," said Fallon. "The Krishnans don't go in much for exploring the country of the mind, especially the Balhibuma, who consider 'emself a martial race and all that sort of thing. The only philosopher I ever knew was Sainian bad-Sabzovan, some years ago at the court of the Dour of Gozashtand. And I never could understand him."

"Where is this philosopher now?" asked Fredro.

Fallon shrugged. "Where are the snows of yesteryear? He dropped out of sight."

Mjipa said: "Well, I'm sure you can still show Dr. Fredro a lot of things of interest. There is one thing he's particularly anxious to see, which ordinary tourists never do."

"What's that?" said Fallon. "If you mean Madame Farudi's place in the Izandu..."

"No, no, nothing like that. He merely wants you to get him into the Safq."

II

FALLON stared, then cried, "What?"

"I said," repeated Mjipa, "that Dr. Fredro wants you to get him into the Safq. You know what that is, don't you?"

"Certainly, But what in the name of Bakh does he want to do that for?"

"If—if I may explain," said Fredro. "I am archeologist."

"One of those blokes who digs up a piece of broken butterplate and reconstructs the history of the Kalwm Empire from it? Go on; I rumble to you."

The visitor made motions with his hands, but seemed to have trouble getting the words out. "Look, Mr. Fallon. Visualize. You know Krishna is great experiment."

"Yes?"

"Interplanetary Council tries to protect the people of this planet against too-fast cultural change by their technological blockade. Of course that has not worked altogether. Some Earthly inventions and—ah—customs leaked through before they gave visitors pseudo-hypnotic treatment, and others like the printing press have been allowed to come in. So today we see—how shall I say?—we witness native cultures beginning to crumble under impact of Terran cultural radiation. Is important that all information about native culture and history be got quickly, before this process runs its course."

"Why?"

"Because first effects of such cultural change is—is to destroy the veneration of affected population for native traditions, history, monuments, relics—everything of that kind. But takes much longer to—ah—to inculcate in

them the intellectual regard for such things characteristic of—of well-developed industrial-scientific culture."

FALLON fidgeted impatiently. Between the polysyllabic abstractions and the thick accent he was not sure that he understood half of what Fredro was saying.

Fredro continued: "As example, one nineteenth-century pasha of Egypt planned to tear down Great Pyramid of Khufu for building-stone, under impression he was being an enlightened modern statesman, like commercial-minded Europeans he knew."

"Yes, yes, yes, but what's that got to do with our sticking our heads into a noose by breaking into that thing? I know there's a cult based upon alleged measurements of the interior. What's that gang, Percy?"

"The Neophilosophical Society," said Mjipa, "or as the Krishnan branch calls itself, the Mejraf Janjira."

"What is?" said Fredro.

"Oh, they believe that every planet has some monument—like that Egyptian pyramid you mentioned, or the Tower of the Gods on Ormazd—by whose measurements you can prophecy the future history of the planet. Their idea is that these things were put up by some space-travelling race, before the beginning of recorded history, who knew all future

history because they'd seen it by means of a time-traveling gadget. Naturally they picked the Salf for that honor on Krishna. They turn people like that loose here, and then wonder why Krishnans consider all Earthmen cracked."

FALLON said: "Well, I'm no scientist, Dr. Fredro, but I hardly suppose you take that sort of thing seriously. I must say, you don't look cracked, at least not on the outside."

"Certainly not," said Fredro.

"Then why are you so anxious to get inside? You won't find anything but a lot of stone passageways and rooms, some fitted up for the Yeshite services. And perhaps a genuine pre-Kalwm privy."

"You see, Mr. Fallon," said Fredro. "no other Terran has ever got into it and it might—ah—fling light on the history of the Kalwm and pre-Kalwm periods. If nobody goes in, then Balhibuma might destroy it when their own culture breaks down."

"All very well, old chap. Not that I have any objection to science, mind you. Wonderful thing and all that."

"Thank you," said Fredro.

"But if you want to risk your neck you'll have to do it on your own."

"But, Mr. Fallon..."

"Not interested. Definitely, absolutely, positively."

Fredro looked more embarrassed than ever. "You would not—ah—be asked to contribute your services for gratis, you know. I have a small allowance on my appropriation for employ of native assistance."

"You forget," broke in Mjipa, with an edge in his voice, "that Mr. Fallon, despite his manner of life, is not a Krishnan."

Fredro waved a placatory hand, stammering: "I meant no slight, gentlemen."

"Oh, stow it," said Fallon. "I'm not insulted. I don't share Percy's prejudices against Krishnans."

"I AM NOT prejudiced," protested Mjipa; "some of my best friends are Krishnans. But another species is another species, and one should always bear it in mind."

"Meaning they're all right so long as they keep their place," said Fallon, grinning wickedly.

"Not how I should have expressed it, but it's the general idea."

"Yes?"

"Yes. Different races of one species may be substantially the same mentally, as among Terrans; but different species are something else. Nobody, for instance, would claim that the tailed Krishnans were just as intelligent as the tail-less."

Fallon could have thrown in a trenchant remark about the former status of Mjipa's co-racialists, but thought it unwise.

Fredro said: "But Krishnans—tail-less, that is—are most human of all extra-terrestrial species; outstanding example of convergent evolution..."

"They *do* look human," admitted Mjipa, "but it doesn't follow they're psychologically any more like us than Martians or Isidians."

"But we are talking about Krishnans," said Fredro. "And psychological tests show no differences in average intelligence-level. Or if there are differences of averages, overlap is so great that average-differences are negligible."

"You may trust your tests," said Mjipa, "but I've known these beggars personally for years, and you can't tell me they display human inventiveness and originality."

FALLON spoke up: "But look here, how about the inventions they've made? They've developed a crude camera of their own, for instance. When did *you* invent something, Percy?"

Mjipa made an impatient gesture. "All copied from Terran examples. Leaks in the blockade."

"No," said Fredro. "Is not it either. Krishnan camera is

case of—ah—stimulus-diffusion."

"What?" said Mjipa.

"Stimulus-diffusion, term invented by American anthropologist Kroeber, about two centuries ago."

"What does it mean?" asked Mjipa.

"Where they hear of something in use elsewhere and develop their own version without have seen it. Some primitive Terrans a few centuries ago developed writing that way. But it still requires inventiveness."

Mjipa persisted: "Well, even granting all you claim, these natives do differ temperamentally from us, and intelligence does no good without the will to use it."

"How do you know they are different?" asked Fredro.

"There was some psychologist who tested a lot of them and pointed out that they lack some of our Terran forms of insanity altogether, such as paranoia..."

Fallon broke in: "Isn't paranoia what that loon Kir's got?"

Mjipa shrugged. "Not my field. But that's what this chap said, also pointing out their strong tendency towards hysteria and sadism."

Fredro persisted: "That is not what I had so much in the mind. I have not been here before, but I have studied Krishnan arts and crafts on Earth, and these show the highest degree of imagina-

tive fertility—sculpture, poetry, and such...”

“Well,” said Mjipa, “perhaps I should say that while they may have imagination, it doesn’t take the scientific or technological bent that it does among Terrans.”

FALLON, stifling a yawn, interrupted: “Mind saving the debate till I’ve gone? I don’t understand half of what you’re talking about. I’m satisfied to know that some Krishnans are good bloops and others are stinkers—just as with Terrans—and you can’t tell which are which until you know them. Now, how much would this stipend be?” he asked, more from curiosity than from any intention of seriously considering the offer.

“Two and one-half karda a day,” replied Fredro.

While this was a high wage in Balhib, Fallon had just turned down a lump-sum offer of a thousand. “Sorry, Dr. Fredro. No sale.”

“Possibly I could—I could squeeze a little more out of.”

“No sir! Not for ten times that offer. People have tried to get into that thing before and always came to a bad end.”

“Well,” said Mjipa, “you’re destined for a bad end sooner or later anyway.”

“I still prefer it later rather than sooner. As you gentlemen know, I’ll take a

chance; but that’s not a chance, it’s a certainty.”

“Look here,” said Mjipa. “I promised Dr. Fredro assistance, and you owe me for past favors.”

“Not my heart’s blood, Mr. Consul. Be reasonable.”

“IT’S NOT a question of reasonableness,” snapped Mjipa. “It’s a question of a little elementary courage. These stories of the perils of the Safq are nothing but propaganda and primitive native superstition, you know.”

“How d’you know? Been there?”

“No, but it’s a reasonable inference. Cults love to surround their otherwise commonplace operations with mystery, to lure more communicants. Now, you’ve had plenty of experience at that sort of thing; you’re being offered a generous wage; and I particularly wish you to take the job.”

Fallon shot a sharp look at the consul. “Why particularly?”

Mjipa said: “Dr. Fredro, will you excuse us a few minutes? Wait here for me. Come along, Fallon.”

“Thank you,” said Fredro.

Fallon, scowling, followed Mjipa outside. When they found a place with nobody near, Mjipa said in a low voice: “Here’s the story. Three Earthmen have disappeared from my jurisdiction in the past three years, and I

haven't found a trace of them. And they're not the sort of men who'd normally get into bad company and get their throats cut."

"Well?" said Fallon. "If they were trying to get into the Safq, that proves my point. Serves them right."

"I have no reason to believe they were trying to enter the Safq; but they might have been taken into it. In any case, I should be remiss in my duty, when confronted with a mystery like this, if I didn't exhaust all efforts to solve it."

Fallon shook his head. "If you want to get into that monstrosity, go ahead..."

"IF IT WEREN'T for the color of my skin, which can't be disguised, I would." Mjipa gripped Fallon's arm. "So you, my dear Fallon, are going in, and don't think you're not."

"Why? To make a fourth at bridge with these missing blighters?"

"To find out what happened. Good God, man, haven't you any pride of species? Would you leave a fellow-Terran to the mercies of these savages?"

"That would depend. Some Terrans, yes."

"But one of your own kind..."

"I," said Fallon, "try to judge people on their individual merits, whether they have arms or trunks or tenta-

cles, and I think that's a lot more civilized attitude than yours."

"Well, I suppose there's no use appealing to your decency or patriotism, then. But if you come around next ten-night for your longevity-dose, don't be surprised if I'm just out of them."

"I can get them on the black market if I have to," said Fallon stubbornly.

Mjipa glared at Fallon with deadly fixity. "And how long d'you think you'd live to enjoy your longevity if I told Chabarian about your spying for the Kassarans of Qaath?"

"My sp—I don't know what you're talking about," replied Fallon, icy fear shooting down his spine.

"Oh, yes you do. And don't think I wouldn't tell him."

"So...with all your noble talk, you'd betray a fellow-Terran to the Krishnans after all?"

"I don't like to, but you leave me no other choice."

"But you, as Consul, are supposed to protect me—not drive me to suicide!"

MJIPA SNORTED. "You're no asset to the human race as you are—living with a Krishnan woman, and lowering our prestige in the eyes of the natives."

"Then why bother me?"

"Because, with all your faults, you're just the man for a job like this, and I won't

hesitate to force you to undertake it."

"How could I get in without a disguise? The barber at Novorecife used to carry a whole line of false antennae and things, but..."

"I'll furnish that. Now, I'm going back into that pavilion, either to tell Fredro you'll make the arrangements, or to tell Kir's minister about your meetings with that snake, Qais of Babaal. Which shall it be?"

Fallon turned his blood-shot eyes upon the consul, whose face might have been carved from basalt for all the human weakness that it showed. "Can you furnish me with some advance information? A plan of the interior, for instance, or a libretto of the rites of Yesht?"

"No. I believe the Neophilosophers know, or think they know, something about the interior of the building; but I don't know of any members of that cult in Balhib. You'll have to dig that stuff up yourself. Well?"

Fallon paused a minute more, postponing the evil choice as long as possible. Then, seeing Mjipa about to speak again, he said: "Oh, hell; you win, damn you. Now, let's have some data. Who are these three missing Earthmen?" he asked briskly, as if he had been eager to take the assignment all along. And in fact, now that he had resigned himself to this risky

task, he felt his old venturesomeness and curiosity stirring within him.

"WELL, THERE was Lavrenti Botkin, the popular-science writer; he went out to walk on the city wall one evening and never came back."

"I read something about it in the *Rashm* at the time. Go on."

"And there was Candido Soares, a Brazilian engineer; and Adam Daly, an American factory-manager."

Fallon said: "Do you notice anything about their occupations?"

"They're all technical people, in one sense or another."

"Mightn't somebody be trying to round up scientists and engineers to build modern weapons for them? That sort of thing has been tried, you know."

"I thought of that. If I remember rightly," said Mjipa with a keen glance, "you once attempted something of the sort yourself, by corrupting Novorecife to let you bring in a crate of machine-guns."

"Now, now, Percy, let's let the dead past bury the dead."

Mjipa continued: "But that was before we had the Saint-Remy pseudo-hypnotic treatment. If only it had been developed a few decades earlier... Anyway, these people couldn't give out such knowledge, even under torture, any more than you or I could;

and the natives know it. However, when we find these missing people we shall no doubt find the reason for their abduction."

★ ★ ★

THE LONG Krishnan day died. As he opened his own front door, Anthony Fallon's manner acquired a subtle furtiveness. He slipped stealthily in, quietly took off his sword-belt, and hung it on the hatrack.

He stood for a moment, listening, then tiptoed into the main room. From a shelf he took down a couple of small goblets of natural crystal, the product of the skilled fingers of the artisans of Majbur. They were practically the only items of value in the shabby little living-dining-room. Fallon had picked them up during one of his rare flush periods.

Fallon uncorked the bottle (the Krishnans had not yet achieved the felicity of screw-caps) and poured two hookers of kavd. At the gurgle of the liquid a female Krishnan voice spoke from the kitchen: "Antane?"

"It is I, dear," said Fallon in Balhibou. "Home the hero..."

"So there you are! I hope you enjoyed your worthless self, frolicking after the strumpets at the Festival."

"Never looked at one," said Fallon. "I'll prove it tonight."

"*Cha!* Were your visit as innocent as that, you could have taken me. By 'Anerik the Enlightener, I might be a tailed slave for all the entertainment I receive."

"Now, Gazi my love, I've told you time and again. "

"Of course you've told me! But need I believe such moonshine? How big a fool think you I am? Why I ever accepted you as *jagain* I know not."

STUNG TO his own defense, Fallon snapped: "Because you were a brotherless woman, without a home of your own. Now stop yammering and come in and have a drink. I've got something to show you."

"You *zaft!*" began the woman furiously, then as the import of his words sank in: "Oh, in that case, I'll come forthwith."

The curtain to the kitchen parted and Fallon's *jagaini* entered weaing only a short pleated skirt and sandals. She was a tall, powerfully-built Krishnan woman, no longer young, but well-made and attractive by Krishnan standards. Her relationship to Fallon was neither that of mistress nor that of wife, but something of both.

For the Balhibuma did not recognize marriage, holding it impractical in a warrior race, such as they had been in earlier centuries. Instead each woman lived with one

of her brothers, and was visited at intervals by her jagain—a voluntary relationship terminable at whim, but exclusive while it lasted. Meanwhile the brother (who would normally be some other female's jagain) reared the children hatched from the eggs of his sister and her jagains. Therefore, instead of the patronymics of the other Varasto nations, the Balhiburna tagged themselves with the name of the maternal uncle who had reared them. Gazi's full name was Gazi er-Doukh, Gazi the niece of Doukh. A woman who—like Gazi—actually lived with her jagain was deemed unfortunate and declassé.

Fallon, looking at Gazi in the doorway, wondered if he had been so clever in choosing Krishna as the scene of his extra-terrestrial activities. Krishna was by far the most popular inhabited planet with enterprising Terrans, for the simple reason that Krishnans were the only known intelligent extra-terrestrial species with whom intimate relations were physically possible, at least on any pleasurable basis—though, of course, there was never any issue to a union between members of such unrelated species.

IN HIS YOUNGER days, that would have made a big difference to Fallon, who in his earthly career as an actor, World Police troop-

er, radio broadcaster, hippopotamus-farmer, and other occupations had conferred the pleasures of gallantry upon many Terran females. Now that he was getting on, however, he wondered whether he would not be just as well off among the scaled or furred inhabitants of some other Earth-type planet. At least, one would not have to cope with Gazi's scenes.

Then why didn't he walk out on her? She could not stop him. But she cooked well; he was fond of her in a way; and even if middle-aging, Fallon was not yet so old that his lectural arrangements were a matter of indifference. He held up the goblet that he had poured for her.

She took it, saying: "'Tis grateful; but I ween you've spent the last of our house-keeping money on it."

Fallon dug out the wallet that hung from his belt the fistful of gold pieces that he had extracted from Qais. Gazi's eyes widened; her hand shot out to snatch. Fallon jerked the money back, laughing, then handed her two ten-kard coins. The rest he put back in the wallet.

"That should keep the menage running for a few ten-nights," he said. "When you need more, ask."

"*Bakhan*," she muttered, sinking into the chair and sipping. "If I know you,

'twill do no good to ask where you got these."

"NONE WHATEVER," he replied cheerfully. "Some day you'll learn that I *never* discuss business. That's one reason I'm alive." "A vile, indign business, I'll warrant." "It feeds us. What's dinner?"

"Cutlets of unba with badr, and a tunest for dessert. Is your mysterious business over for the day?"

"I think so," he responded cautiously.

"Then what hinders you from taking me to the Festival this eve? There'll be fireworks and a mock-battle."

"Sorry, dear, but you forget I've got the guard tonight."

"Always something!" She stared gloomily at her glass. "What have I done to the gods that they should hold me in such despte?"

"Have another drink and you'll feel better. If you wish to go by yourself."

"And be stripped and ravished in the shadows by some band of wanton idlers? Nay, thank you." This was, Fallon knew, no chimaera; the rougher elements of Zanid often got out of hand on such occasions. "Not that you'd care," she continued. "I might as well turn to the statue on the Fountain of Garar."

"Cheer up. I can do some

things the statue can't, you must admit. Some day, when I get my throne back..."

"How long have I heard that same song?"

"...when I get my throne back, there'll be fun and games enough. Meanwhile, business before pleasure, as Lord Zerre found out in the story."

"WHAT'S THIS?" she inquired. "I know not that one."

"No? It's a legend they tell in Gozashand and Zamba. Seems this bloke Zerre was out to steal a magical egg which the giant Damghan kept in the middle of a maze as bait for his trap. You see, when people got lost in the maze the giant would lean over the walls, pick them out, and eat them, chomp-chomp. Zerre, like a sensible chap, set about it by making love to the giant's daughter Sivandi and so persuaded her to guide him in and out of the maze while the giant was taking his afternoon nap. That worked fine, and Zerre was galloping off with egg and girl, until they stopped for a rest and a bit of love-making. Damghan caught up with them and pinned both with one thrust of his spear. Moral: Keep your mind on your job. And mine's to get Zamba back."

"By then shall we be too old for pleasure."

"Well, I'll cook up a date

for us soon, I swear by the sword of Qondyor. And speaking of cooking, aren't those cutlets about done?"

★ ★ ★

THE THIRD section of the Juru Company of the Civic Guard, or Municipal Watch, of Zanid was already calling in when Fallon arrived at the armory. He snatched his bill from the rack and stepped into his place.

As Fallon had explained to Mjipa at the Festival, it was impractical to exhibit the Juru Company on parade. The Juru district was largely inhabited by poor non-Krishnans, and its representation in the Watch resembled a sampling of all the Earth-type planets having intelligent inhabitants. Besides the Krishnans, there were several other Earthmen: Weems, Kisari, Nunez, Ramanand, and so on. There were twelve Osirians and thirteen Thothians. There was a Thorian (not to be confused with the Thothians)—something like an ostrich with arms instead of wings. There was an Isidian—an ebb-tugged nightmare combination of elephant and dachshund. And others of still different form and origin.

In front of the line of guards stood the well-made Captain Kordaq er-Gilan, of the regular army of Balhib,

frowning from under the towering crest of his helmet. Fallon knew why Kordaq glowered. The captain was a conscientious spit-and-polish soldier, who would have loved to beat a company of civic guards into machine-like precision and uniformity. But what sort of uniformity could one expect from such a heterogeneous crew? It was useless even to try to make them buy uniforms; the Thothians claimed that clothes over their fur would stifle them, and no tailor in Balhib would have undertaken to cut a suit for the Isidian.

"Zuho'i!" cried Captain Kordaq, and the jagged line came to some sort of attention.

The captain announced: "There shall be combat drill for all my heroes upon the western plain next Fiveday, during the hour after Roqir's red rays first shed their carmine beams upon it. We shall bring..."

CAPTAIN KORDAQ exhibited to an extreme degree the Krishnan tendency to wrap his speech, even the simplest sentences, in fustian magniloquence. At this point, however, he was interrupted by a long loud chorus of groans from the section.

"Wherefore in Hishkak do you resty knaves waul like the creak of an aged tree in a gale?" cried the captain. "One would surmise from

these ululations that you'd been commanded on pain of evisceration to slay a shan with a dust-broom!"

"Combat drill!" moaned Savaich, the fat tavern-keeper from Shimad Street, and the senior squad-leader of the section. "Of what use would that be to us? Well ye know one mounted Junga could scatter the whole company with a few flights of arrows, as Qarar scattered the hosts of Dupulan. Then why this silly soldier-playing?"

Junga was the Balhibo term for one of the steppe-dwellers to the west: the fierce folk of Qaath, Dhaukia, or Yeramis.

Kordaq said: "For shame, Master Savaich, that one of our marital race should speak so cowardly! 'Tis the express command of the minister that all companies of the Civic Guard do exercise at arms, willy-nilly."

"I'll resign," muttered Savaich.

"RESIGNATIONS are not being accepted, poltroon!" Kordaq lowered his voice confidentially. "Betwixt me and ye, a vagrant rumor has been wafted by the breeze from the steppes to my ears, saying: the state of the West is indeed parlous and threatening. The Kamuran of Qaath, may Yesht make his eyes fall out, has called up his tribal levies and is marching to and fro throughout

the length and breadth of his whole immense domain." He pronounced "Qaath" something like "Qasf", for the Balhibo tongue has no dentals.

"He cannot so assoil us!" said Savaich. "We've done nought to provoke him, and besides he swore not to in the treaty that followed the Battle of Tajrosh."

Kordaq gave an exaggerated sigh. "So, old tun of lard, thought the good folk of Jo'ol and Suria and Dhaukia and other places I could mention, had I nothing else to do this night save bandy arguments. At any event, such are your orders. Now off upon your rounds, and let not the reek of the wine-shop, nor the enticements of the giglot's bed, seduce you from the speedy execution of your allotted task. Watch well for thieves who rape from citizens' doorways their very door-gongs. There's come a veritable plague of such thefts since preparations for sanguinary strife have driven up the price of metal.

"Now, then, Master Antane, take your squad to the eastern metes of the district via Ya'fal Street, circling the Safq and returning via Barfur Street. Take particular notice of the alleys near the fountain of Qarar. There have been three robberies and a dolorous murder there during the last ten-night: a reeky disgrace to the virtuous vigi-

lance of the Guard. Master Mokku, you shall patrol..."

AS EACH squad received its orders, it broke ranks and wandered off into the night, bills at all angles and bodies swathed against the cold in thick quilted over-tunics. For while the seasons are less pronounced on Krishna than on Earth, the diurnal temperature range is considerable, especially in a prairie region like that in which Zanid stands.

Fallon's squad comprised three persons besides himself: two Krishnans and an Oeirian. It was not usual for non-Krishnans to hold offices of command, even corporalships, in a Varasto army, but the polyethnic Juru made its own rules.

To be sent to cover the district wherein lay the Safq suited Fallon fine. The squad cut through an alley on to Ya'fal Street and proceeded along that thoroughfare—two on each side—peering into doorways for signs of burglary or other irregularities. The two largest of Krishna's three moons, Karrim and Go'naz, provided an illumination which, though wan, was adequate when supplemented by the light of the little fires burning in iron cressets at the main intersections. Once the squad passed the cart, drawn by a single shaihan, that made the rounds of the city every night re-

plenishing the fuel in these holders.

Fallon had heard a rumor of a plan to substitute the more efficient bitumen-lamps for these cressets. He had also heard that it had been blocked by a magnate who owned woodlands in the foothills of the Qe'ba Mountains in eastern Balhib, and sold firewood to Zanid.

NOW AND then, Fallon and his "men" halted as sounds from within the houses attracted their attention. But tonight, nothing illegal seemed to be in progress. One uproar was plainly that of a woman quarreling with her jagain; but since neither was calling for help, and the neighbors were not complaining, Fallon saw no valid reason for interference. Another racket was caused by a drunken party.

At its east end, Ya'fal Street bent sharply before opening out into the Square of Qarar. As Fallon neared this bend, he became aware of a noise from the square. The squad increased its gait and burst around the corner to find a crowd of Krishnans about the Fountain of Qarar and others hurrying up.

The Square of Qarar (or Garar to use the Balhibo form of the name) was not square at all, but an elongated irregular polygon. In one end lay the Fountain of Qarar, from the midst of which

the statue of the Heracleian hero towered up in the moonlight over the heads of the crowd. The sculptor had portrayed Qarar as trampling on a monster, strangling another with one hand, and clutching one of his numerous lady-loves with his other arm. At the other end of the square rose the tomb of King Balade, surmounted by a statue of the great king himself seated in a pensive attitude.

Steel rang from the crowd's interior, and the moons glinted briefly on blades appearing over the heads of the mass. From the crowd came a confused murmur in which Fallon caught an occasional phrase:

"Spit the dirty Yeshtite!"
"Ware his riposte!" "Keep your guard up!"

"Come on," said Fallon, and the four guardsmen strode forward, bills ready.

"The watch!" yelled a voice.

WITH AMAZING celerity, the crowd disintegrated, the duelling-fans running off in all directions to disappear into side-streets and alleys.

"Catch me some witnesses!" cried Fallon, and ran towards the focus of the disturbance.

As the crowd opened out, he saw that two Krishnans were fighting with swords beside the fountain—the heavy straight cut-and-thrust

rapiers of the Varasto nations.

Out of the corner of his eyes Fallon saw Qone, one of his Krishnans, catch one run-away around the ankle with the hook of his bill and pounce upon his sprawling victim. Fallon himself bored in with the intention of beating down the fighters' weapons.

Before he arrived, however, one of the two—distracted by the interruption—glanced around and away from his antagonist.

The latter instantly struck the first man's sword a terrific beat and sent it spinning away across the cobbles. Then he bounded forward and brought his blade down upon the head of his antagonist.

There goes one skull, thought Fallon. The Krishnan who had been struck fell backwards on the cobbles. His assailant stepped forward to run him through; the fatal thrust had started on its way when Fallon knocked the blade up.

WITH A WORDLESS cry of rage, the duellist turned upon Fallon. The latter was being forced back by a murderously reckless attack when Cisasa, the Osirian guardsman, caught the duellist around the waist from behind with his scaly arms and tossed the fellow into the fountain. *Splash!*

Qone appeared at this

point, dragging his witness by a fetter which he had snapped around the Krishnan's neck. As the dunked duellist rose like a sea-god from the waters of the fountain, uttering incoherent cries of rage and menace, Cisasa took hold of him again, hoisted him out of the water, and shook him until his belligerence subsided.

"This one iss trunk," hissed the Osirian.

The remaining Krishnan guardsman appeared at this point, panting and displaying a jacket dangling from the hook of his bill. "Mine slipped from my grasp, I grieve to say."

Fallon was bending over the corpse on the cobbles, which presently groaned and sat up, clapping hands to its bloody head. Examination showed that the folds of the fellow's stocking-turban had cushioned the blow and reduced its effect to a mere scalp-wound.

Fallon hauled the wounded Krishnan to his feet, saying: "This one's drunk, too. What does the witness say?"

"I saw all!" cried the witness. "I shall be glad to tell. Why did you trip me? I'd have come willingly. Always on the side of the law am I, as any neighbor'll tell you!"

"I know," said Fallon. "It was just an optical illusion that you were running away from us. Tell your story."

"Well sir, the one with

the cut head is Yeshtite and the other an adherent of some new cult called Krishnan Science, an offshoot of some Terran sect. They fell to disputing at Razjun's Tavern, the Krishnan Scientist holding that all evil was non-existent, and therefore the Safq and the temple of Yesht therein had no reality, nor did the worshippers of Yesht. Well, this Yeshtite took exception to being dismissed to non-existence and challenged..."

"He lies!" said the Yeshtite. "I spake no word of challenge, and did but defend myself against the villainous assault of this fap rascal-lion..."

THIS FAP rascal-lion, having coughed the water out of his windpipe, interrupted to shout: "Liar yourself! Who cast a mug of falat-wine into my face? If that be no challenge..."

"'Twas but a gentle proof of my reality, you son of Myande the Execrable!" The Yeshtite, dark blood trickling down his face, blinked at Fallon and turned his wrath upon the Earthman. "A Terran creature giving commands to a loyal Balhibu in his own capital! Why go not you scowles back to those en-seamed planets whence you came? Why corrupt you our ancestral faiths with depraved, subversive heresies?"

Fallon said: "You three

can take this theologian and his pal to the House of Judgment, can't you?"

"Aye," said the Krishnan guards.

"Then take them there. I shall meet you back at the armory in time for the second round."

"Why take me?" wailed the witness. "I'm but a decent law-abiding citizen. I can be summoned any time..."

Fallon replied: "If you can identify yourself at the House of Judgment, they may let you go home."

Fallon watched the procession file out of the Square of Qarar, the chains of the prisoners jingling. He was glad that he did not have to go along. It was a good three-hoda hike, and the omnibus-coaches would have stopped running by now.

Moreover he was glad of a chance to visit the Safq by himself. He could do so less conspicuously in his official capacity; and to be able to do so without his fellow-guards was better yet. Luck seemed with him so far.

ANTHONY FALLON shouldered his bill and set off eastward. When he had gone a few blocks, the apex of the Safq began to appear over the low roofs of the intervening houses. The structure, he knew, stood just inside the boundary separating the Juru from the Bacha district, in which lay nearly

all the other temples of Zanid. Religion was the business of the Bacha just as manufacturing was that of the Izan-du.

The Balhibo word *safq* means any of a family of small Krishnan invertebrates, some aquatic and some terrestrial. An ordinary land-safq looks something like a Terran snail, spiral shell and all, but instead of slithering along on a carpet of its own slime it creeps upon a myriad of small legs.

The Safq proper was an immense conical ziggurat of hand-fitted jadeite blocks, over a hundred and fifty meters high, with a spiral fluting in obvious imitation of the shell of a living safq. Its origin was lost in the endless corridors of Krishnan history. During the city-state period, following the overthrow of the Kalwm Empire by the then-barbarous Varastuma, the city of Zanid had grown up around the Safq, huddling against it until it could hardly be seen except at a distance. King Kir's great predecessor, King Balade, had cleared the buildings away from the monumental edifice and put a small park around it.

Fallon entered this park and walked slowly around the huge circumference of the Safq, ears peeled and eyes probing the structure, as if by sheer will-power he could

force his vision to penetrate the stone.

IT WOULD take more than eyesight to do that, however. Various marauders had tried to bore into the structure during the last few millennia, but had been baffled by the hardness of the jadeite. As far back as historical records went, the priest of Yesht had held the Safq. When the Ruzuma had sacked Zanid, these priests had simply closed their massive bronze doors and defied the invaders to do their worst with fire and pick and battering-ram.

Nor was the Safq the only building owned by the cult of Yesht; there were smaller temples in Lussar, Malmaj, and other minor Balhibo cities. And beyond the little park to the east, across the boundary of the Bacha, Fallon could discern the onion-dome of the Chapel of Yesht. This was used for the minor services, to which the general public was admitted. Here were held classes for the instruction of prospective converts and other churchly activities. But the priest of Yesht allowed laymen into their major stronghold only on significant occasions, and then only tried and established members of the sect.

Fallon came around to the entrance, corresponding to the opening of the shell of a living sa'q. The beams of

Karrim showed the immense metal doors which, it was rumored, turned upon ball-bearings of jewels. They still showed the marks of the futile attack by the soldiers of Ruz, hundreds of Krishnan years before. To the left of these doors something white caught Fallon's eye.

HE STRODE closer. No sound came from inside, until he put his ear against the chilly bronze of the portal. Then something did come to him: a faint thump or bang, rhythmically repeated, but too muted by distance and thicknesses of masonry for Fallon to tell whether it was the sound of a drum, a gong, or a beaten anvil. After a while it stopped, then began again.

Fallon turned his attention from this puzzle—whose solution would no doubt transpire once he got inside the Safq—to the white thing, which comprised a number of sheets of native Krishnan paper tacked to the temple's bulletin-board with thorns of the qulaf-bush. Across the top of the board appeared the words **DAKHT VĀ-YESHT ZANIDO.** (Cathedral of Yesht in Zanid.) Fallon, though not very skilled in written Balhibou, managed to puzzle it out. The word "Yesht" was easy to pick out, for in the Balhibo print of book-hand characters it looked something like "OU62," though it read from right to left.

He strained his eyes at the sheets. The biggest said **PROGRAM OF SERVICES**; but despite the brightness of the double moonlight, he could not read the printing below it. (When he had been younger, he thought, he could have read it.) At last he took out his Krishnan cigar-lighter and snapped it into flame.

Then Fallon leaned against the board, got out a small pad and pencil, and copied off the wording.

III

WHEN ANTHONY FALLON walked into the armory, Captain Kordaq was sitting at the record-table—his crested helmet standing on the floor beside him and a pair of black-rimmed spectacles upon his nose—writing by lamp-light. He was bringing the company rolls up to date, and looked up over the tops of his eyeglasses at Fallon. "Hail, Master Antane! Where's your squad?"

Fallon told him.

"Good; most excellent, sir. A deed of dazzling dought, worthy of a very Qarar. Take your ease whilst awaiting their return."

The captain picked up a jug, poured an extra cup of shurab, and pushed it towards Fallon. "Master Antane, be you not the jagain of Gazi er-Doukh?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Something you said."

"Why—do you know her, too?"

Kordaq sighed. "Aye. In former times I aspired to that position myself. I burned with passion like a lake of lava, but ere aught could come of it her only brother was slain and I lost touch with her. Might I impose upon your hospitality to the extent of renewing an old acquaintance some day?"

"Surely, any time. Glad to have you around."

Fallon looked toward the door as his squad trailed in to report the prisoners, and witness duly delivered to the House of Justice. He said: "Rest your bones a minute, boys, before we start out again."

THE SQUAD sat around and drank shurab for a quarter-hour. Then another squad came in from its round, and Kordaq gave Fallon's crew its orders for the next round: "Go out via Barfur Street, then head south along the boundary of the Dumu, for Chillan's gang of rogues infests the eastern march of the Dumu..."

The Dumu, southernmost district of Zanid, was notorious as the city's principal thieves' quarter. Those from other sections were loud in the accusation that the criminals must have corrupted that district's watch to operate so freely, while the ac-

cused company of the Guard as vigorously denied the charge, pleading that they were sadly undermanned.

Fallon's squad had turned off Barfur Street and was heading along a stinking alley that zigzagged towards the district boundary when a noise ahead made Fallon freeze in his tracks, then motion his squad forward with caution. Peering around a corner he saw a citizen backed against a wall by three characters. One covered the victim with a crossbow-pistol; another man held him with a sword, and a third relieved him of purse and rings. The hold-up had evidently just started.

This was a rare chance. Ordinarily, a squad of the Guard arrived on the spot to find the victim only—either dead on the cobbles, or alive and yammering about the city's lawlessness.

Knowing that if he rushed directly at the criminals, they would duck into houses and alleys before he could reach them, Fallon whispered to Cissasa: "Circle around this little block on our right and take them from the other side. Just come on at full speed; when we see you, we'll jump them from here."

CISASA faded away like a shadow. Fallon heard the slight click of the Osirian's claws on the cobbles as the dinosaurian guard went like

the wind. Cissasa, Fallon knew, could outrun two normal Earthmen or Krishnans; otherwise he would not have sent him. The hold-up would have been over by the time a man could have circumambulated the block.

The click-click of claws came again, louder, and Cissasa burst into view around a bend in the crooked street, heading for the miscreants with Jabberwockian strides.

"Come on," said Fallon.

At the sound of feet, the robbers whirled. Fallon heard the snap of the pistol's bowstring, but in the darkness he could not tell who had been shot at. There was no indication that the bolt had struck anybody.

The robbers leaped for cover. Cissasa gave an enormous bound and came down with his birdlike feet on the back of the crossbowman, hurling him prone to the ground.

The tall thin robber with the sword, in a moment of confusion, ran towards Fallon, then skidded to a halt. Fallon thrust at the fellow with his bill, heard the clank of steel, and felt the jar down the shaft as the robber parried. Fallon's two Krishnans ran past him after the fellow who had been frisking the victim, and who had bolted past Cissasa towards the mouth of an alley.

Fallon thrust and parried with his bill, pressing forward, but watching warily

lest his antagonist catch his bill-shaft with his free hand and then close in. By a fluke, he got a jab home on the fellow's sword-arm. The sword clattered to the pavement and the man turned to run. Seeing that he would have little chance of catching this lanky scoundrel in a stern chase, Fallon hurled his bill javelinwise. The point of the weapon struck the fellow between the shoulders. The robber ran on a couple of steps with the bill sticking in his back, then faltered and fell forward.

Fallon ran after him, drawing his own sword; but by the time he came up with the robber the latter was lying prone, kicking and coughing blood. The two Krishnans of the squad now reappeared from the alley into which they had chased the third thief, cursing the fellow for having given them the slip. They had recovered the citizen's purse, which the robber had dropped, but not his rings, for which he loudly berated them for inefficiency.

ROQIR WAS rising redly over the roof-tops of Zanid when Anthony Fallon and his squad returned to the armory from their final round. They stacked their bills back in the rack and lined up to receive the nominal pay that the municipal prefect paid to members of the Guard for watch-duty.

"The stint's adjourned; forget not Fiveday's drill," said Kordaq, sitting at his table and handing out quarter-kard silver pieces.

"Something tells me," murmured Fallon, "that a mysterious malady will lay our gallant company low the day before the drill."

"Qarar's blood! It had better not! I shall hold you squad-leaders responsible for turning out your men."

"I'm not feeling too well myself, sir," said Fallon with a grin as he pocketed the half-kard he got in consideration of his rank.

"Saucy buffoon!" snorted Kordaq. "Why we tolerate your insolence I know not. ... But you'll not forget that wherof I spoke earlier, friend Antane?"

"No, no. I'll make arrangements." Fallon walked off, waving a casual farewell to the other members of his squad. Perhaps, he thought, he was foolish to bait Kordaq, a plain, competent, conscientious, and reasonably friendly soldier without any notable personal eccentricities. But the Krishnan always rose to the bait so beautifully.

FALLON was, he supposed, equally foolish to spend one night out of every ten tramping the streets for one miserable half-kard, pick-and-shovel wages. He was too self-willed and erratic to fit

smoothly into a military machine, having considerable talent for command but very little for obedience. For he was one of those who are never happy unless imposing their wills on those about them, but who find the reverse process—acquiescence to the desires of others—an intolerable affront to their self-esteem. And as a foreigner, he could hardly hope to rise to the top of the Balhibo tree.

Yet here he was, wearing the brassard of the Civic Guard. Why? Because the sight of a uniform, a band, or a parade had an invincible if childish fascination for him. Trailing his bill around the dusty streets of Zanid gave him, if only fleetingly, the illusion of being a potential Alexander or Napoleon. And in his present state his ego could use all of such support that it could get.

Gazi was asleep when he plodded home, his tired brain picking at the knots of the Safq problem. She awoke as he slid into bed.

"Gree'ing," she said. "How 'bout. . ."

"Wake me up at the end of the second hour," he mumbled, and fell asleep.

Almost at once, it seemed to him, Gazi was shaking his shoulder and telling him to get up. He had had only about three Earthly hours' sleep; but he still had to arise now to work in all the

things that he meant to do this day. Knowing that he had to appear in court that afternoon, he shaved and put on his second-best suit, gulped a hasty meal, slouched out into the bright mid-morning sun, and set out for Tashin's Inn.

THE A'VAZ DISTRICT ranged from plain slums, where it adjoined the Juru near the Balade Gate, to slums sprinkled with studios as it abutted upon the artistic and theatrical Sahi to the north. Tashin's, near the city wall on the west side of the A'vaz, was a rambling structure built (like most Balhibo houses) around a central court.

This court was filled, this morning, with the histrionic characters who made up the inn's regular clientele. A rope-walker had rigged up a rope stretching from one bit of architectural foofaraw diagonally across the court to another, and was slinking across, waving a parasol to keep his balance. A trio of tumblers were tossing one another about in mutilatory fashion, while on the other side of the inclosure a man rehearsed a tame gerka in its tricks. A singer was practicing scales; an actor was reciting his lines with gestures.

Fallon asked the gatekeeper: "Where's Turanj the Seer?"

"Second storey, room thirteen. Go you right up."

As he started across the courtyard, Fallon was forcibly bumped by one of a trio of Krishnans. As he recovered his balance, glaring, the burly character who had bumped him bowed, saying: "A thousand pardons, good my sir! Tashin's wine has unsteadied my legs. Hold, are you not he with whom I got drunk at yesterday's festival?"

Simultaneously the other two closed in on the sides. The man who had bumped him was saying something genial about stepping over to Saferir's for a snort, and one of the two who had flanked him had laid a friendly hand on his left shoulder, when Fallon, who had suspected something of the sort, felt rather than saw the razor-sharp little knife with which the third member of the trio was about to slit his purse.

WITHOUT altering his own forced smile, Fallon shouldered the Krishnans aside, took a step and then a leap, turning as he did so and whipping out his rapier, so that he came down facing all three in the guard position. He was not a little pleased with himself for still being so agile.

"Sorry, gentlemen," he said, "but I have another engagement. And I need my money, really I do."

He glanced swiftly around the courtyard. At the flash of steel everybody had frozen. The rope-walker, forgetting his craft for an instant, lost his balance, waved his arms, and leaped lightly to the ground.

At Fallon's words there came a ripple of derisive laughter. The three thieves exchanged glowering glances and stalked out the gate. Fallon sheathed his weapon and continued on his way. For the moment, he had the crowd with him—if he had tried to kill or arrest the thieves, or had yelled for the law, his life would not have been worth a brass arzu.

FALLON found the thirteenth room on the second level. Inside, he confronted Qais of Babaal, who had been inhaling the smoke of smoldering ramandu from a little brazier in front of him.

"Well?" asked Qais sleepily.

Fallon said: "I've been thinking of that offer you made me yesterday."

"Which offer?"

"The one having to do with the Safq."

"Oh. Tell me not that further reflection has braced your wavering courage, as it did Qarar's ere he fought the giant Damghan?"

"Possibly. I do mean to get back to Zamba some day, you know. But for a miserable thousand karda..." He made the negative gesture.

"What price had you in mind?"

"Five thousand would tempt me strongly."

"Au! As well ask for the Kamuran's treasury entire. Though perhaps I could raise the offer by a hundred karda or so..."

They haggled and haggled; at last, Fallon got half of what he had at first asked, including an advance of a hundred karda to be paid at once. The twenty-five hundred karda would not, he knew, suffice in itself to put him back upon his throne. But it would do for a start. Then he said: "That's fine, Master Q—Turanj, except for one thing."

"What's that, sir?"

"For an offer of that size, I don't think it would be clever for anybody to take anybody's word—if you follow me."

QAIS RAISED both his eyebrows and his antennae. "Sirrah! Do you imply that I, the faithful minion of great Ghuur of Qaath, and a true-born Qaathian myself, would swindle you out of your price? By the noze of Tyazan, such insolence is not to be borne! I am who I am..."

"Now, now, calm down. After all, I might attempt a bit of swindling too, you know."

"That, Terran creature, I can well believe, were I so

temerarious as to pay you in advance. If that's what was in your mind, dismiss it."

"Nor that. What I had in mind was to deposit the money with some trustworthy third party."

"As takeholder, eh? Hm: An idea, sir—but one with two patent flaws, to wit! What makes you think I bear such tempting sums about with me? And whom in this sink-hole could we trust on a matter of business concerning us of Qaath, for whom the love of the Balhibuma is something less than ardent?"

Fallon grinned and dropped his bomb. "That's something I figured out only recently. You have a banker in Zanid."

"Ridiculous!"

"Not at all, unless you've got a hoard buried in a hole in the ground. Twice, now, you've run out of money in dealing with me; and each time you raised plenty more in a matter of an hour or two. That wouldn't have given you time to ride back to Qaath, unless you had Prince Bourujird's flying chariot. But it would let you go to somebody in Zanid. And I know who that somebody is."

"Indeed, Master Antane?"

"INDEED. Now who in Zanid would be likely to serve you as a banker? Some financier who had cause to dislike King Kir. So I remembered what I know of Zanid's banking houses, and

recalled that a couple of years ago Kastambang er-'Amirut got into trouble with the Dour. Kir had got some idea that he wanted all his visitors to approach him barefoot; Kastambang wouldn't because he has fallen arches and it hurts him to walk without his corrective shoes. He'd loaned Kir a couple of hundred thousand karda some years before, and Kir seized upon this excuse to fine Kastambang the whole amount—and the interest, too—so he shouldn't have to repay it. Kastambang has never dealt with the Dour since then, nor appeared at court. Logically he'd be your man. If he's not your banker already, he could be; and in either instance, we could employ him as stakeholder."

Fallon leaned back, hands clasped behind his head, and grinned triumphantly. Qais brooded, chin in hand, then finally said: "I concede nothing, yet, save that you're a shrewd scrutator, Master Antante. You'd filch the treasure of Dakhaq from under his very nose. Before we walk out further upon the perilous Bridge of Zung that connects heaven and earth, tell me how you propose to invade the Safq."

"I thought that if we made our arrangement with Kastambang, he might know somebody who, in turn, knew the inner workings of the place. For instance if he

knew of a renegade priest of Yesht—they exist, though they find it safe not to admit the fact—he or I might persuade the man to tell us..."

Qais interrupted: "To tell you what's in the monument? *Cha!* Why sirrah, should I pay you in such a case? You'd run no risk. Why should I not pay the renegade myself?"

"**I**F YOU'LL let me finish," I said Fallon coldly. "I have every intention of examining the thing myself from the inside; no second-hand hearsay report." (Fallon knew that he would have to enter the Safq to get Fredro in, anyway, however tempting the simple method of buying information would otherwise have been.)

"But I shall, you'll admit, have a better chance of getting out alive if I know something of the plan of the place in advance. Moreover I thought the fellow might tell us the Ritual of Yesht, so that I could slip into the temple in costume and go through a service... Well, further details will suggest themselves, but that gives you an idea of how I propose to start."

"Aye." Qais yawned prodigiously, forcing the sleepy Fallon to do likewise, and aside. "Alack! I was just working up a vision of, the most beautiful tortures you ever dreamt of when your im-

portune arrival shattered it. But duty before pleasure, my master. Let us forth."

"To Kastambang's?"

"Whither else?"

OUT IN THE street, Qais hailed a khizun—an aya-drawn Balhibo hackney-carriage—and got in. Fallon's spirits rose. It had been some time since he had been able to afford a ride, and Kastambang's office lay in the commercial Kharju District, over on the far side of the city.

First they wound through the stinking alleys of the A'vaz; then through the section of the northern part of the Izandu, where courtezans called and postured tumefaciently in open windows. They emerged from this region to pass between the glitter of the theaters of the Sahi on their left and the somber bustle of the industrial Izandu on their right. Smoke arose from busy forges, and the racket of hammers, drills, files, saws, and other tools mingled in a pervasive susuration. Then they clopped along a series of broad avenues which carried them through a little park, across which the wind from the steppes sent little whirls of dust dancing.

At last they plunged into the teeming magnificence of the Kharju with its shops and houses of commerce. As they angled towards the southeast, the city's one hill, crowned

by the ancient castle of the kings of Balhib, rose ahead of them.

"Kastambang's," said Qais, pointing with his stick.

Fallon cheerfully let Qais pay the driver—after all, the master spy was merely dipping into the bottomless purse of Ghuur of Uriiq—and followed Qais into the building. There were the usual gatekeeper and the usual central court, this time variegated with tinkling fountains and statues from far Katai-Jhogorai.

Kastambang, whom Fallon had never met, proved to be an enormous Krishnan with green hair faded to pale jade, his big jowly face furrowed by sharp lines. His tun of a body was swathed in a vermilion toga in the style of Suruskand. Qais, after ceremonious introductions, said: "Sir, we would speak privily."

"Oh," said Kastambang. "We can manage, we can manage."

WITHOUT any change of expression he struck a small gong on his desk. A tailed man from the Koloft Swamps of Mikardand stuck his hairy head into the conference room.

"Prepare the lair," said the banker, then to Fallon: "Will you have a cigar, Earthman? The place will soon be ready."

The cigar proved excellent. The banker said: "Have you

enjoyed our city fair on this visit, Master Turanj?"

"Aye, sir. I went to a play last night: the third of my life."

"Which one?"

"Saqqiz's *Woeful Tragedy of Queen Dejanai of Qirib*, in fourteen acts."

"Found you it effective?"

"Up till about the tenth act. After that the playwright seemed to repeat himself; and moreover, his stage was so littered with corpses that the actors playing quick characters had much ado to avoid stumbling over 'em." Qais yawned.

Kastambang made a contemptuous gesture. "Sir, this Saqqiz of Ruz is but one of these ultra-clever moderns who, having nought to say, conceal the fact by saying it in the most eccentric manner possible. You'd do better to stick to revivals of the classics, such as Harian's *Conspirators*, which opens tomorrow night."

Q AIS SAID: "The difficulty with your Harian is that the plays are given in ancient dialects which I find hard to follow. I am, after all, no scholar, but one of a race of rude and simple steppe-riders, who count their education complete when they can ride the aya, shoot the bow, and tell the truth."

"Not always is it so given," said Kastambang. "Not always. There was a great to-do

here in Zanid last year over the presentation of another Harian revival, *The Ancestors*. When the playmaster sought to bring it out not only in modern speech, but also with modern raiment and scenery—thus, for ensample, garbing the hero in a proper tunic and loin-cloth instead of the skins of beasts—the Harian Society threatened to riot should he take such liberties with the hallowed traditions of the drama. Whereupon those who'd bought seats in advance, in hopes of witnessing a beguiling novelty, threatened to riot if the play come on in its traditional form." The banker drew on his cigar.

"What came to pass?" asked Qais.

"So beset from both sides, like your Qaathian hero Tuwaaq, the playmaster avowed that if only the partisans would promise to remain quiescent he'd transgress the prohibitions of neither. And this he did, in effect, by causing his actors to perform stert-naked upon a barren stage."

"Pleased that the multitude?" asked Qais.

"They were too astonished to object; but a pair of those Terran busybodies, whose insolence it is to tell us Krishnans what gods to worship and what moral code to serve..." (the banker shot a glance of reproof at Fallon) "...stood up in the audi-

ence to denounce the proceedings as a scandalous piece of wicked pravity, so we had our riot after all..."

AT THAT moment, the Koloftu reappeared, saying: "'Tis ready, master."

"Come, sirs," said Kastambang, heaving himself to his feet. "Come."

He proved less impressive standing than sitting, being short in the legs and moving with difficulty, wheezing and limping. He led them down the hall to a curtained doorway, the Koloftu trailing behind. A flunkey opened the door and Kastambang stood to one side, motioning them in with an expectant air. They stepped into a cage suspended in a shaft. The cage presently sank with jerks while from above came the rattle of gear-wheels. Kastambang looked at his passengers with expectation, then with a shade of disappointment. He said: "I forgot, Master Antane. Being from Earth, you must be accustomed to elevators."

"Why, yes I am," said Fallon. "But this is a splendid innovation. Reminds me of the lifts in small French hotels on Earth, with a sign saying they may be used only for going up."

The elevator stopped with a bump against a big leather cushion at the bottom of the shaft. Kastambang's elevator was, after the Safq, the lead-

ing wonder of Zanid, though Qais had ridden in it before and Fallon was hardly awed.

It was raised by a couple of stalward Koloftuma heaving on cranks, while its descent was checked by a crude brake. Fallon thought privately that it was only a matter of time before the lift-crew got careless and dropped their master to the bottom of his hidey-hole with a bang. In the meantime, however, the contraption at least saved the financier's inadequate arches.

KASTAMBANG led his brace of guests along a dimly-lighted hall, and around several corners, to a big solid qong-wood door before which stood a Balhibo arbalestier with his crossbow cocked. Fallon observed a transverse slot in the floor a few meters before he reached the door. Glancing up, he saw a matching slot in the ceiling; a portcullis, evidently. The crossbowman opened the door, which was equipped with loopholes closed on the farther side by sliding metal plates, and led the party into a small room with several more doors. A hairy Koloftu stood in front of one door with a spiked club.

This door gave into another small room, containing a man in the Moorish-looking armor of a Mikardando knight with a drawn sword. And this door let into the lair itself: an underground vault of huge cy-

clopean blocks, with no apertures other than the door and a couple of small ventilation holes in the ceiling.

On the stone floor stood a big table of qong-wood inlaid with other woods and with polished safq-shell in the intricate arabesque patterns of Suria. Around it were ranged a dozen chairs of the same material. Fallon was glad that he had settled among the Balhibuma, who sat on chairs, rather than among some of the Krishnan nations who knelt or squatted or sat cross-legged on the floor like yogis. His joints were getting a little stiff for such gymnastics.

THEY SAT. The Koloft man stood with folded arms in the doorway.

"First," said Qais, "I should like to draw two thousand five hundred karda, gold, from my account."

Kastambang raised his antennae. "Have rumors then come to your ear that the House of Kastambang's in sore financial straits? If they have, I can assure you they're false."

"Not at all, sir. I do but wish the money for a special enterprise."

"Very well, good my sir," said Kastambang, scribbling a note. "Very well."

Kastambang gave directions to the Koloftu, who bowed and disappeared. Qais said: "Master Antane is undertaking a—let us say a journalis-

tic assignment for me. He is to report to me on the interior of the Safq..."

Qais gave a few further details, explaining that the money was to be paid to Fallon on the completion of his task. The Koloftu came back with a bag which he set down with a ponderous clank (it weighed over seven kilos). Kastambang untied the draw-string and let the pieces spill out upon the table.

Fallon consciously kept his breath from coming faster; kept himself from leaning forward and glaring covetously at the hoard. A man could spend his whole life on Earth without seeing a golden coin; but here on Krishna, money was still hard bright clinking stuff that weighed your pants down—real money in the ancient sense—not bits of engraved paper backed by nothing in particular. The Republic of Mikardand had once, hearing of Terran customs, tried paper money. However, the issue of notes had gotten out of hand, and the resulting runaway inflation had ruined so many of Mikardand's bourgeoisie that they had revolted against the rule of the knights of the Order of Qarar. Though the rebels had been put down with much massacre and destruction, the memory of the episode had prejudiced all the other nations of the Triple Seas against paper money.

FALLON casually took one of the ten-kard pieces and examined it by the yellow lamp-light, turning it over as if it were of mild interest as an exotic curiosum, rather than something for which he would lie, steal, and murder—not for the money itself, but for the throne that he hoped to recover by means of it.

"Be that arrangement comfortable to you, Master Antane?" said Kastambang. "Suits it?"

Fallon started; he had gone into a kind of trance staring at the gold piece. He pulled himself together, saying: "Certainly. First, please pay me my hundred... Thank you. Now let's have a written memorandum of the transaction. Nothing compromising, just a draft from Master Turanj."

"Ohe!" said Qais. "How shall my clever friend here be prevented from cashing this draft ere he's fulfilled his obligation?"

Kastambang said: "In Balhib, we observe the custom of tearing such instruments in half and giving each half to one of the parties. Thus neither can exercise his monetary power without the other. In this case, methinks we'd best tear it in three, eh?"

KASTAMBANG opened a drawer in the table, brought out a stack of forms,

and started to fill out one of them. Fallon suggested: "Leave the name of the payee blank, will you? I'll fill it in later."

"Wherefore?" asked the banker. "'Twill not be safe, for then any knave could cash it."

"I might wish to use another name; and if it's in three pieces, it's reasonably safe. By the way, you have an account with Ta'lun and Fosq in Majbur, don't you?"

"Aye, sir, aye; we have."

"Then please make the sum payable there as well as here."

"Why, sir, why?"

"I might be leaving on a trip after this job's done," said Fallon. "And I shouldn't want to carry all that gold with me."

"Aye, folk who deal with Master Turanj do oft become appreciative of the benefits of travel. I'll write my colleagues in Majbur to earmark the sum."

Kastambang entered a notation on the face of the instrument. When Qais had signed the paper, Kastambang folded it along two creases and tore it carefully into three pieces. One he gave to each of his visitors and one he placed in the drawer, which he locked. Fallon asked, "In case of argument, will you arbitrate, Kastambang?"

"If Master Turanj agrees," said the Banker. Qais waved an affirmative.

"Then," said Kastambang, "you'd best meet again here in my chambers this transaction to consummate, so that I can judge how well Master Antane has carried his end of the ladder. If I award him the fillet, he can, as he likes, take the gold, or all three parts of the draft and get his money in bustling Majbur."

"Good enough," said Fallon. "And now perhaps you can help me a bit with this project."

"Eh? How?" said Kastambang suspiciously. "I am who I am: a banker, sir, a banker; no skulking intrigant..."

FALLON held up a hand. "No, no; I merely wondered if you, with your extensive connections, knew anybody familiar with the rituals of Yesht."

"Oho! So that's how the river runs? Aye, my connections are indeed extensive. Aye, sir, truly extensive. Now let me contemplate..." Kastambang put his finger-tips together, exactly as his Terran cognate might have done. "Aye, sir, I know one; just one. But he'll not give you the secrets of the Safq proper, for the good reason that he's never been within the haunted structure."

"How then does he know the ritual?" said Fallon.

Kastambang chuckled. "Simple. He was a priest of Yesht in Lussar, but under the influence of Terran ma-

terialism broke away, changed his identity to avoid being murdered in reprisal, and came to Zanid where he rose in the world of manufacture. As none knows his past save I, for a consideration I can—ah—persuade him to divulge the desired facts."

Fallon said: "Your consideration will have to come out of the funds of Master Turanj, not out of mine."

Qais yelped a protest, but Fallon stood firm, counting on the Qaathian's avidity for the information to overcome his thrift. This course proved the correct one, for the master spy and the banker soon agreed upon the price for this transaction. Fallon said: "Now, who's this renegade priest?"

"BY BAKH, do you think me so simple as to tell you, thus giving you a hold upon him? Nay, Master Antane, nay; he's already marked as my game, not yours. Furthermore he himself would never consent so openly his past to reveal."

"What then?"

"What I'll do is this: Tomorrow evening I give an entertainment at my city house, whither this anonymous turncoat's bidden, along with many of the leading trees of Zanid." Kastambang tossed an invitation-card engraved with the complex looping Balhibo script across the table.

"Thanks indeed," said Fal-

lon as he put the card away with studied nonchalance, hardly glancing at it.

Kastambang explained: "Come, sir, and I'll thrust you and him, masked, into a room alone, so that neither shall know the other's face or have witnesses to the other's perfidy. Do you own a decent suit of festive raiment?"

"I can get by," said Fallon, mentally reviewing his wardrobe. By Qondyor and Hoi, he thought, this would be a chance to entertain Gazi in style, and stop her yammer about never going out!

"Good!" said the banker. "Very good. At the beginning of the twelfth hour on the morrow, then. Forget it not, the twelfth hour."

On leaving Kastambang's, Qais hired another khizun to take him back to Tashin's. Fallon got in uninvited, saying: "You may drop me off at the House of Justice, Master Turanj."

"Au! Are you then enmeshed in the toils of law-suits and all those luns? We of Qaath have no use for such games. If a man offends you, take off his head; or better yet, bind him up and do him to death slowly with a hot iron." Qais gave his unpleasant little hacking giggle.

Fallon said: "I'm a witness against some people I caught last night on guard-duty. How much longer will you be gone?"

"How know I? A seed of

the ramandu-plant, wafted by the wind from the steppes, is no more uncertain in its course than I. But you can always leave a message for me at Tashin's."

Fallon got out at the House of Justice and found that he had a half-hour before noon, when the hearings began. He used the time to fortify his spirit with a hasty meal and a few stiff drinks at a tavern.

★ ★ ★

KRISHNAN law might lack the careful refinements that Earth had developed to protect the accused, but none could deny its dispatch. The duellists pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct and paid fines in lieu of being bound over on more serious charges.

On his way out the Yesh-tite, a fellow named Girej, stopped at the witness bench and said to Fallon: "Master Antane, abject apologies for my unmannerly words last night. When I came to my senses I recalled that 'twas you who with your bill struck up the brand of the accursed Krishnan Scientists when he'd have transfixed me therewith. So thank you for my poor life."

Fallon made a never-mind gesture. "That's all right, old man; merely doing my duty."

Girej jingled his purse. "To atone my discourtesy, perhaps you'd let me buy you a cup

of kvad in slender token of my gratitude?"

"You don't even have to be grateful to do that, if you'll wait around until this next case is disposed of."

The Yeshtite agreed, and Fallon was called up to the stand to testify about the robber. (The one whom he had speared was too badly hurt to be tried, and the other was still at large.) The prisoner, one Shave, being taken *in flagrante delicto*, was tried at once and convicted.

The magistrate said: "Take him away, torture him until he reveals the name of his other accomplice, and strike off his head. Next case."

FALLON slouched out arm in arm with Girej the Yeshtite, for he always encouraged such contacts in the hope of picking up useful information. They wandered over to the tavern where Fallon had lunched and restored their tissues while Girej garrulously reiterated his gratitude. He said: "You not only saved a citizen of our fair albeit windy city, Master Antane, from an untimely and unjust end; you also saved a fellow-guardsmen."

"Why, are you in the Guard too?"

"Aye, sir, and in the Juru Company, even as you are."

Fallon looked sharply at the man. "That's odd. I don't recall seeing you at any of the drills or meetings, and I

don't often forget people."

The last statement was no boast. Fallon had a phenomenal memory for names and faces, and knew more Krishnans in Zanid than most locally-born Zaniduma.

"I have for some time been on special duty, sir."

"What do you do?"

The Yeshtite looked crafty. "Oh, I'm sworn to secrecy and so won't tell you, craving your pardon. I'll admit this much: that I guard a door."

"A door?" said Fallon. "Have another."

"Aye, a door. But never shall you learn where 'tis or what it opens unto."

"INTERESTING. But look here: If this door is as important as all that, why does the government use one of us to watch it? Craving your pardon, of course. I should think they'd post somebody from Kir's private guard."

"They did," said Girej with a self-satisfied chuckle. "But then early this year came these alarums regarding the barbarous Ghuur of Qaath, and all the regulars have been put upon a war footing. Kir's guard's been cut to less than half, his surplus stalwarts being dispersed, some to the frontiers, others to train new levies. Hence Minister Chabarian sought out reliable members of the watch, of my religious

persuasion, to take the places of the soldiery."

"What's your religious persuasion got to do with it?" said Fallon.

"Why, only a Yeshtite—but hold; I've spake too much already. Drink deep, my Ter-ran friend, and foul not that long proboscis by thrusting it into matters alien to it, like Tyazan sniffing for gold."

And that was all that Fal-lon could get out of Girej, though he plied him with drink and dropped hints and leading questions. The Yesh-tite merely went off into a long rambling lecture on his occupation. He was, it trans-pired, an apothecary, in busi-ness with his uncle (the word he used meant the particular uncle who had reared him). He re-counted in detail the ex-traordinary properties of the various herbs and potions

stocked by the establishment, the difficulty of obtaining them, and the quasimagical principles on which they operated:

"... Take ye, now, the root of the *kharogin*, which oft as-sumes the semblance of a hu-man foot. 'Tis as plain as the peaks of Darya that the gods meant this weed as a sover-eign remedy for all the ail-ments the human foot is heir to: fallen arches, sprung in-steps, ingrown nails, corns, bunions..."

Fallon politely refrained from telling Girej that, in cold fact, his panaceas prob-ably ranged from the harm-lessly useless to the lethally harmful; the fellow hugged Fallon at parting and swore he'd be at his service in any future contingency.

[To Be Continued]

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DISCIPLINED IMAGINATION

ONE REASON why very little fiction can be a mirror-image of "reality" is that actual living takes place under the disciplines of both man and nature, while the art of fiction is ruled by man-made disciplines alone. Facts can at times be stranger, more interesting, etc., than fiction; but the reporter's job is to make order out of a given series of events, while the author fits events into his own prearranged order. In the process of constructing a story, he can re-arrange his order and alter his events at will, without censure, so long as (a) he is not relating as *an actual event in the real world* something which we can easily prove never took place (b)

his finished work convinces us by its own inner logic.

The search for "truth" in reporting events is to find out, as nearly as we can, exactly what *did* happen and why and how—sometimes merely for the sake of a clear record, more often for the purpose of estimating what may be likely to happen as a result.

Fiction also seeks "truth", but of a different sort: understanding human beings through examination of events surrounding them, and their reactions to these events. In the process, the author tells not (as a rule) what really happened somewhere, sometime, but what ought to have happened under

[Turn to page 126]

satellites

in fact and fiction

by Richard H. Macklin, Ph. D.

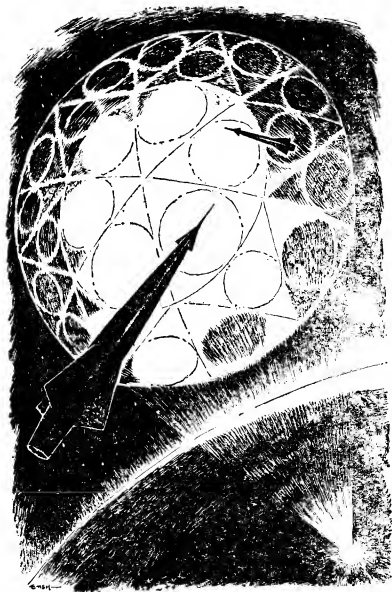
Illustrated by EMSR

When fact begins to catch up with prophetic fiction, it's interesting to examine old stories to see how good authors were at guessing and extrapolating. How do stories about satellites measure up?

MAGAZINE publishing takes time; the delay between the writing and the publishing of an article may be as much as three months. As I write this, the planet Earth has three or four more satellites than it has had in ages, and it looks as though more may be coming along any time now.

I say "three or four" because the exact number is in doubt. First we have *Sputnik*, which actually consists of two parts: the satellite itself, and the shell of the last stage of the rocket that sent it up. (*Sputnik*, by the way, is a Russian word meaning "fellow traveler". By an odd twist of language, it's possible to make all sorts of puns on Russian "satellites" and "fellow travelers".)

Following soon on the heels of



The "space mirror" of science fiction is a perfectly feasible kind of satellite.

Sputnik came the first space vehicle to carry a living creature—the dog-carrying *Muttnik*. (*Muttnik*, of course, is not a Russian word; it was coined by American newspapermen. But there is a Russian word *mutnik*, which means "one who fishes in muddy waters". Considering how little we actually know about the conditions up there, it seems singularly appropriate.)

These, then, are Earth's new moons: *Sputnik*, part of the *Sputnik* rocket, *Muttnik*, and—possibly—part of the *Muttnik* rocket. As of now, we seem to be in danger of losing some of them; *Sputnik* is coming perilously close to denser atmosphere, and its rocket may already have fallen.

But, as I said, there is a time delay between writing and publishing. By the time this hits the stands, there may be a few more satellites up there. There is a rumor going around that the first American satellite will be filled with cattle—it will be the herd shot round the world.

SCIENCE FICTION being what it is, and science fiction fans being what they are, none of this came as a surprise to the regular readers of this magazine. Some of them, perhaps, didn't think it would come so soon, but there was little doubt that it would

happen eventually. Earth satellites, either as a basic story gimmick or as a part of the background, have been popping up in science fiction stories for nearly thirty years. About the only thing that surprised the science fictioneer was the fact that they were Russian satellites; in all the stories, the first satellites were usually American or British, unless they had been constructed by one lone scientist working for himself.

As it is, the United States announced the launching of her first satellite "some time in December" of 1957, two months after the launching of *Sputnik*. It failed.

As nearly everyone knows, though, neither the United States nor the U.S.S.R. can take credit for being the real pioneers in rocketry and satellite work. Aside from the work of one single American, Dr. Robert H. Goddard, who flew the first American liquid-propelled rocket in 1926, most of the early work—and speculation—on space travel was done by Germans. Early rocketry is punctuated with names like Hermann Oberth, Wernher von Braun, and Willy Ley.

LESS KNOWN is a name which should be more widely publicized today, Hermann Noordung. If satellite-conscious science fiction writers of the thirties and for-

ties managed to make fewer mistakes than usual in their prophccies, it probably is due to the fact that much of their writing about space travel was based, either directly or indirectly, on the work of Hermann Noordung.

His impact on science fiction was a result of the publication of "Problems of Space Flying" in *Science Wonder Stories*—July, August, and September 1929. In this three-part article, accompanied by profuse line illustrations and diagrams, Noordung outlined in detail the construction of a space station or man-carrying satellite. It was Noordung who designed the wheel-shaped station seen so commonly in modern illustrations and seriously considered to be the actual method by which such a station will be built.

So meticulous and so carefully thought out was Noordung's work that, except for minor improvements due to subsequent inventions, modern moon designers have little more to say on the subject.

Now, the peculiar thing about the article is this: in the English translation—at least that part of it published in *Science Wonder Stories*—no mention is made of the fact that a space satellite must be in an orbit about the Earth! Hugo Gernsback, in his introduction to the first part, admits having cut a

great deal from the translation "...because it goes into the realms of higher and intricate mathematics, of interest only to the engineering fraternity and mathematicians." As a result, we are left with a space station that is "in an orbit". But that, by itself, is meaningless.

We'll see what effect this omission had on subsequent satellite stories later in the article.

ANOTHER thing that Noordung introduced to science fiction readers was the concept of the space mirror. Hermann Oberth had mentioned it earlier, but very few people in this country have ever seen Oberth's work.

The idea is quite simple: A concave mirror, situated in an orbit around Earth, could be built large enough to concentrate a fearful amount of energy in one place. If the focal length were just right, we'd have a true "heat beam" of no mean ability!

Now, Noordung wanted to build this mirror out of—of all things!—sodium. Metallic sodium is a silvery metal with a density slightly less than that of water (0.971 at 20° C) and a consistency similar to that of a good grade of soap. On exposure to air, the metal oxidizes rapidly, and a small amount of moisture can cause it to burst into flame. It melts at 97° Centigrade, three degrees below the boiling point of water.

Why sodium for our mirror? Well, in the first place, it's light, and comparatively little fuel would be needed to ship a cubic foot of it up to our space station. In the second place, because of its softness, it would be easy to work; the plates for the mirror could be made in space. Such a mirror couldn't be built on Earth, because after about one second of exposure to the air it would cease to be a mirror. The oxides and hydroxide of sodium don't make very good reflectors for mirrors.

But there's no air in space, so why not use sodium? Well, there are reasons.

TAKE, FOR instance, "The Stone From the Moon" by Otto Willi Gail (*Science Wonder Quarterly*, Spring 1930). Gail, a German, had probably read Noordung's work before it was published in *Science Wonder Stories*, since he'd have been hard put to read an article in the summer of 1929, write the story in German, and have it translated into English before the deadline for the Spring 1930 issue of *Science Wonder Quarterly*.

Gail's superscientist, Korf, builds a satellite, called Astropol, in an orbit one hundred thousand miles above Earth. Astropol is built "chiefly of sodium".

Korf explains:

"...under the conditions of

airless and heatless space this metal gives the most excellent building material that can be desired. In the cold of two hundred seventy degrees below zero it is like the best steel in firmness, and it also has the advantage of weighing very little."

Korf, naturally, is also building a mirror—out of sodium.

What's wrong with this? Well, damn it, space *isn't* cold! If I had a time machine, one of the things I'd do is go back in time and shoot—not my grandfather, but the guy who first said that space was cold. Since I can't do that, I'll just have to do my best to correct that misconception now.

What color is a green shirt in an absolutely dark room?

Silly question, isn't it? Color is a property of light, and you can't have color in the dark. The question is meaningless. But notice: Being in the dark doesn't change the shirt or the dye in it in any way!

NOW THE question, "What is the temperature of space?" is equally meaningless. Space has no temperature, because temperature is a measure of the random velocities of molecules; without molecules, you can't have temperature, any more than you can have color without light.

But—the fact that a vacuum can not have any temperature in *no* way affects the ability of solid matter in that vacuum to have a temperature! The only thing a vacuum can do is limit the ways that heat can be added to or removed from an object.

Suppose you have a cup of hot coffee sitting on a table. It will, as you know, eventually cool off. How does the heat leave the coffee? Most of it will leave by going into nearby matter. The coffee heats the cup; the cup heats the table; and so on. Also, the air around the cup heats up, rises, and makes way for cooler air, which also heats up and rises. These two methods of heat transfer are known respectively as *conduction* (from coffee to cup to table, etc.) and *convection* (from coffee to the moving air). In both these methods, the heat is lost because the rapidly moving molecules (mostly water) in the coffee bang against other molecules which are moving more slowly and transfer their energy to them.

ANOTHER way in which the coffee can cool off is through *radiation*. When molecules start banging into each other in a heated object, they begin to act like tiny radio broadcasters because of the electrical nature of atoms. The wavelength of the broadcast depends on how fast the

molecules are moving in relation to each other—in other words, on the temperature. Each time they “broadcast”, they lose a little energy and so they cool off a bit.

The wavelength of the radiation from a cup of hot coffee is in the infra-red, and there isn't much of it. The radiation from a piece of red-hot steel is in the infra-red and the visible red; there's quite a bit more of it. The radiation from the sun goes from the infra-red to the hard ultra-violet, and there is plenty of it per gram of material.

The amount of heat radiated is proportional to the fourth power of the absolute temperature. As an example, we'll take an ice cube; it has a temperature of 273° C above Absolute Zero. If you double its temperature, it will become superheated steam at 546° above Absolute Zero, about 173° above the boiling point.

Now, at that temperature, other factors being equal, it will be radiating, not twice as much heat, but *sixteen* times as much—two to the fourth power.

SUPPOSE you don't want the coffee to get cold. What do you do? You have to stop the heat loss, of course. To stop the radiation losses, you surround the coffee with a mirror, so that all the radiation bounces off and

goes right back into the coffee, where it is absorbed—reversing the broadcasting process, you see; each molecule now becomes a receiver—and becomes heat energy again.

That stops the radiation. How about the conduction and convection? Well, that's simple; just don't let anything touch the coffee—surround it with a vacuum!

And that's exactly how a vacuum bottle is made. Every workman's lunch pail contains one of those handy gadgets. Of course, it will do just as good a job keeping heat out as in, since the barrier is as strong one way as another, so milk or iced tea will stay cold for hours, just as coffee will stay hot.

(No vacuum jug is perfect, naturally, so the contents won't stay that way forever.)

So a vacuum simply limits the number of ways that heat can leave or enter a body. Conduction and convection are out; only radiation can travel through a vacuum.

What happens, then, when we put a material body out in space? Will it get hotter or colder? That, of course, will depend on the radiation. If it is radiating out more heat than it is absorbing, it will cool off; if it is absorbing more than it is radiating, it will warm up.

LET'S GET back to our sodium mirror. A shiny surface will reflect a great deal

of radiation back into space, while a black surface will absorb it. The sun, being the biggest heat radiator in the Solar System, will be the thing we'll have to contend with. How hot will our sodium mirror get if it's exposed to the direct rays of the sun at a distance of ninety-three million miles?

If the surface toward the sun is very shiny indeed, and the side away from the sun is a dead black, the temperature will be just about 225° Absolute, or about 54° below zero Fahrenheit. That's pretty cold, but it's nowhere near 459° below zero Fahrenheit, which is the Absolute Zero point.

On the other hand, if we turn the mirror around, so that the shiny side is away from the sun and the black side is toward it, the sodium will melt pretty quickly, since its temperature will be right around the boiling point of water.

All this, of course, assumes that the sodium mirror is pretty nearly a perfect reflector on one side and an absolutely perfect radiator on the other. Since this couldn't be done in practice, we'll have to assume that the mirror would actually reach an equilibrium temperature somewhere in between those two extremes—around 70° Fahrenheit, just about room temperature.

Frankly, I don't think I'd

like the job of polishing sodium to a mirror finish; any material with the consistency of soap just won't polish too well. And, at any rate, the tensile strength isn't going to be anything to brag about, so the mirror will have to be braced—and there goes all your weight-saving. Magnesium would have been a better choice.

As for building the space satellite station itself out of sodium—no, thank you!

Another thing that enters in here is a phenomenon known as the photoelectric effect. The high-energy radiation from the sun would tend to knock the outer electrons out of the sodium atoms; sodium is pretty easy to ionize. That would mean that you'd have to figure some way of replacing those electrons, or your station is going to work up one hell of a positive charge! Every ship that tried to land on it would find itself blasting a big hole in the hull as the arc vaporized the sodium. And the men in the station wouldn't be too comfortable, either.

All in all, however, Herr Gail seems to have been a fairly accurate, if somewhat over-enthusiastic, disciple of Noordung's.

SOMETIMES a good scientific article can lead to rather ludicrous results. This usually happens when a person with little or no scientific

training borrows from the article without knowing—or, perhaps, caring—what he's doing.

"The Satellite of Doom" by D. D. Sharp, in the January 1931 issue of *Wonder Stories* is a beautiful example. Sharp knew that a satellite had to be in an orbit around Earth, but that's about all he knew.

The story concerns our hero, Clifford Peterson, who is going to present his idea of putting up a satellite to wealthy Banker Rothberg, who can finance the project. At a meeting of scientists in Rothberg's office, Clifford explains his brainstorm:

"Bodies do not float in space," Clifford began. "They are pulled toward each other. What keeps them from flying together in a huge mass is their velocity, which is much greater than that of a highpowered rifle bullet as it leaves the gun. They move with hurricanes of speed that would belittle cyclones. It is this that overcomes the pull of gravitation."

All these metaphors and similes don't say much. Speed alone won't keep Body A from colliding with Body B; what if they're rushing toward each other?

TO DEMONSTRATE what he means, Clifford pulls a little ball on an elastic cord out of his pocket and pro-

ceeds to whirl it around. The elastic cord, says he, represents the pull of gravity toward the sun.

He whirled the ball faster. The rubber string stretched, as he went on.

"When the speed of the ball increases, the orbit increases. It stretched the pull of the rubber 'gravity'. When the speed decreases the orbit narrows. This illustrates simply the forces which hold every body in space in its proper place."

(At about this time, the reader might think that the august body of scientists who are listening to him got up and walked out rather than listen to such balderdash, but no...)

"Any body moving around the sun with a speed less than 18.6 miles per second must have an orbit smaller than that of the earth, and one having more than 18.6 miles per second would have a larger orbit than that of the earth, while one with a velocity exceeding 26 miles per second would fly away from the sun for good."

WOW! MR. CLIFFORD PETERSON was, to be charitable, somewhat confused. He had the whole thing backward; the closer any satellite is to its primary,

the *faster* it must revolve around it, in order to keep its centrifugal force matched against the increasing gravitational effect of the primary. Mercury, only thirty-six million miles from the Sun, zips along at something like thirty miles per second, while Pluto, nearly four thousand million miles out, loafs along at about three miles per second. Notice that Mercury is moving four miles per second faster than the twenty-six miles per second Mr. Peterson mentions as the escape velocity of the Solar System.

Where do you suppose he got that figure? It happens to be the escape velocity from the Solar System at a distance of one Astronomical Unit—ninety-three million miles. You see, if you try to get away from any massive body, its gravitational field will try to pull you back; the gravity will slow you and your spaceship down. The "escape velocity" of any body is that velocity which is great enough to "overcome" the pull of gravity of that body. Naturally, the farther you are from that body, the less the pull will be, in accordance with Newton's Law. At "escape velocity", your spaceship will reach an infinite distance before the body you are leaving finally slows it to a dead stop. Obviously, the farther you are from that body to begin with, the slower you'll have to go to get away entirely.

"The Satellite of Doom" is full of just such stupidities. The whole purpose of the satellites our hero wants to put up is moronic. He wants to send mail rockets around the Earth, you see, and the satellites have to be up there so that when the rocket leaves the Earth's atmosphere, it can have something for its jets to kick against so that it can get back down!

SUCH A concentrated conglomeration of absolute boneheads as the characters in "The Satellite of Doom" would be difficult to find. They are all, without exception, just plain stupid. The final example of utter cretinism occurs when the villain steps out of his spaceship without a spacesuit on:

"He opened the door of the rocket and it seemed his chest literally blew open like a rotten tire under too much pressure. *He overlooked* the fact that the pressure of air inside his lungs was fifteen pounds to the square inch. He had on some kind of jacket to protect him from the cold, but the explosion blew it wide open." (*Italics mine.*)

Just how a villain as imbecilic as all that could possibly have been a menace to anybody is hard to see; it could only happen in a story where the rest of the charac-

ters were equally dim-brained.

THE CHARACTERS in Edmond Hamilton's "Space Mirror" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, August 1937) are pretty bright people, in comparison. But the space station in the story is flatly impossible. At that time, *Thrilling Wonder Stories* was running a column called "The Story Behind the Story", in which the authors explained how they came to write their story in that issue—money considerations aside. In that department, Mr. Hamilton admits that his ideas are derived from Oberth and Noordung. If either of those men read "Space Mirror", they must have winced when they read:

A huge concave mirror floated in space like a satellite, slowly revolving around the rotating Earth. Its concave, inner face always turned toward the south polar regions of Earth, and also toward the glaring sun.

No, no, *no*, Mr. Hamilton! *Please!*

It is here that the failure of Noordung's article, in translation, to mention the characteristics of a satellite's orbit comes into play. The damned things can't just *hang* up there! They have to go *around* the Earth! If they don't, they'll fall down, like anything else.

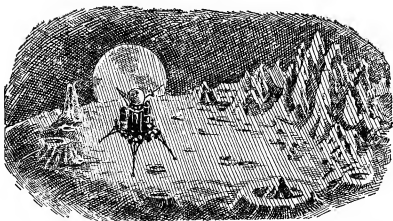
Obviously, any space mirror which is in an orbit around the Earth can't keep one face always turned toward the South Pole. A satellite in a near-circular orbit around Earth will very nearly follow a Great Circle course; that is, the plane of the orbit would intersect the center of the Earth. If the space mirror goes over the South Pole, it will also go over the North Pole and cross over the Equator between times.

SINCE WORLD WAR II, the space satellite has become more and more common in science fiction. In addition, it has ceased to be the main gimmick of the story and has simply become a part of the background. We have lost our "sense of wonder" about the space station and relegated it to the commonplace, along with the spaceship itself. Such stories as Jack Vance's "Abercrombie Station" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, February 1952) or "To Save a World" by Irving E. Cox, Jr. (*Future Science Fiction*, September 1953) simply state or imply that the stations are up there; their orbital revolution about Earth is taken for granted. In his "Spatial Delivery" (*If*, October 1954), Randall Garrett gives the correct figures when he says that a space station one thousand seventy-five miles from Earth's surface would go around Earth

once every two hours. This is one of the "standard" orbits for projected space stations. For any given distance from Earth, there is a definite velocity for a circular orbit, and therefore a definite period of revolution.

IN MANY of the modern stories, space stations and other types of satellites have become so common that they are accepted as being just another kind of building—a sort of futuristic railroad station or astronomical observatory or whatever. How closely are we actually approaching these predictions?

Sputnik and *Muttnik*, while they are certainly important, are not the sort of thing the average science fiction reader has in mind when he thinks of a space station. *Sputnik*, according to the reports, is a small, instrument-carrying device capable of making broadcasts back to Earth. It kept broadcasting back to Earth in a code known only to the Russians until, presumably, its power ran out. *Muttnik*, carrying Laika, was also instrumented, and sent back data on the dog's respiration, heartbeat, and general physical condition until she was reportedly put to death by remotely-controlled administration of poison before her air ran out. Boastful hints that the Russians would try to bring her down alive didn't pan out.



A landing on the Moon may still be far away — but it's closer now than it was...

As of now, satellites are not being designed as refueling stations for spaceships or as platforms for a thousand-inch telescope. Those will come eventually, but they're still too far in the future to discuss, except theoretically. Before we build anything like that, we'll have to know a great deal more about the upper atmosphere and the emptiness beyond it than we do today. And that's what present-day satellites are designed to do.

WE HAVE a lot of questions to ask. What is the average density of the atmosphere in molecules per cubic centimeter at various heights? Does this density vary? What kind of atoms and molecules are they? To what degree are they ionized?

How many cosmic ray particles pass through a given area per unit time? What is their energy in millions of electron volts? In what directions are they traveling? We know that they are high-velocity atomic nuclei, but how many of which atoms are present?

What effect will hard cosmic rays have on living tissue? On electronic instruments? How long can a human being take zero gravity conditions? If zero gravity will hurt humans after a time, what will it do? What is the intensity of the ultra-violet and X-radiation from the sun? What effect will it have on humans?

These are only a few of the thousands of questions that will have to be answered before we build the space sta-

tions of science fiction, and they will have to be answered by instrumented satellites.

Thus far, our exploration of the upper atmosphere has been by balloons and rockets. Both of these have drawbacks. A balloon, with instruments, won't go very high, as far as interplanetary space is concerned; 120,000 to 140,000 feet is about their upper range. The altitude record for a manned balloon was set on August 18-19, 1957, by Air Force Major David G. Simons, who reached 102,000 feet. The record for aircraft was set by Captain Ian T. Kincheloc, in September 1956, when he reached 126,000 feet in a rocket plane.

At those heights, better than ninety-nine percent of the Earth's atmosphere has been topped, but that upper one percent is the region where "outer space" begins, the region where most of the electrical phenomena manifests itself. It is the atmosphere between thirty and two hundred miles up that we must study now.

BALLOONS, then, are unsatisfactory because they won't go up high enough, but at least they do stay up long enough to get plenty of data. Rockets, on the other hand, can and do get up high enough to give us the information we want; but unless they are put into a high, nearly circular orbit, they don't

stay up long enough to give us more than a fleeting picture.

As an analogy, let's suppose you wanted to know what a baseball game was all about, but there are only two ways to get information about baseball. One is to watch the game from a mountaintop a mile away from the ballpark, using only the naked eye. The other way is to study a series of eight or nine still photographs taken at close range. Either one by itself won't give much information. By co-ordinating the information from both, you'd get a better idea of what the game was all about, but you'd still have plenty to learn.

Getting an instrumented satellite up a few hundred miles is the equivalent of having a television camera in the ballpark; putting up a manned satellite is equivalent to going to the ballpark in person.

THIS SORT of research is what is known in the trade as "advancing the state of the art". The "art", in this case, being the art of building and launching rockets.

Each step teaches us more about the next step. We'll have to learn to walk before we can go dancing; and we'll have to learn to crawl before we can walk. As far as the present state of the art of interplanetary travel is con-

cerned, we're still in the crawl stage.

Putting up satellites, you see, not only teaches us more about the upper atmosphere, it also teaches us more about rocketry so that we can build better rockets to get up higher, faster and cheaper—and learn some more about rocketry so that we can...

And so on.

Present security regulations being what they are, it is impossible—and illegal—to put into print certain things about the present "state of the art". Next month or next year, the whole world may know about them; today they are strictly hush-hush. ("Hush-hush" is a security term for information known only to certain scientists, the President, certain Cabinet members, and the Russian government.)

Some things, however, are in the public domain, so to speak, and can be told without violating security regulations.

Our original intention—pre-*Sputnik*—was for Project Vanguard, using a version of the Navy's Viking rocket, to launch four small, non-instrumented satellites. They were to be small—six inches in diameter, weighing four and a half pounds. Besides what they would teach us, one purpose for launching such mid-gets was to get something—

anything—into an orbit before the Russians did.

MEANWHILE, we were to be working on a twenty-inch, twenty-one and a half pound, fully instrumented MOUSE (Minimum Orbital Unmanned Sattelite of Earth) at an altitude of between two and three hundred miles. After the launching of the small ones in November and December of 1957, the MOUSE would be launched in the spring of 1958.

Those plans had to be changed radically after October 4, 1957. On that date, the Russians launched *Sputnik*, and it was a 23 inch sphere weighing 184 pounds and looping around Earth in an orbit almost at right angles to Earth's equator at a maximum altitude of 560 miles.

After that, our little six inch jobs aren't going to be much good for propaganda purposes, especially since the much-publicized failure of December 6th, 1957. (We do not know, at this writing, how many of the Russian satellites mis-fired before the launching of *Sputnik*.)

Here's another difference between fact and fiction; in fiction, the first try can be a rip-roaring success!

(I haven't had a chance to read Charles Eric Maine's "*Spaceways*", a novel dealing with rocketry, but I'm told that the first two sent up in

that story were failures, due to designing flaws which were not apparent before the firings.)

But, meanwhile, the projected launching of MOUSE has been speeded up. By the time you read this, it may be up there, beeping at us.

Anything further than that is being kept carefully under wraps, but it has become obvious that MOUSE, small as it is in comparison with the Russian satellites, is certainly not the final American word.

Russia, I think, may have made a mistake in being the first to launch a satellite, thereby proving that her rocketry was superior to ours. Americans don't take kindly to proofs of superiority from unfriendly nations; we resent it. In 1941, the Japanese

proved to us that they had a superior Navy and Army. Adolf Hitler proved to us that he had a superior Air Force. They were both right—but not for long. Something like that is what it takes to wake Americans up. It's a shame that we have a tendency to do nothing until someone shows us up; one of these days, it might prove fatal. But if we aren't knocked dead with the first punch, we eventually get up enough steam to pull ahead.

The long-range plans originally called for a manned satellite by 1968-70, and a real, sure-enough, genuine, science-fiction type, wheel-shaped satellite by 1975. I have five bucks that says we'll lop five years off that now. Anyone want to cover it?



The Reckoning



All votes, however received, are tabulated; a vote for 1st place gets "1", for 5th place gets "5", and so on. (Readers are invited to mark stories they consider outstanding "A", and stories they dislike "X"; for the January ratings, "A" votes counted "0"; "X" votes counted "6" — and the total score for each story was divided by five. Lowest scores are the winners.) The final results were:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. The Wild Ones (Tom Godwin) | 2.00 |
| 2. The Better Egg (Dick Hetschel) | 2.45 |
| 3. Prime Commandment (Calvin Knox) | |
| Dangerous Weapon (Donald Franson) | |
| an exact tie for | 2.71 |
| 4. Death Wish (Nicholas G. Lordi) | 3.42 |



invasion vanguard

by T. D.
Bethlen

They ran into what is referred to as one of the ironies of history.

THE INVASION of Earth began quietly enough, on a warm, sluggish Friday afternoon in mid-August of 1959. The people of Earth, grown accustomed by now to the Cold War stalemate that had existed for nearly a decade and a half, were not aware that an interplanetary invasion was scheduled to descend on them in a few days.

They watched the skies, where eleven artificial satellites whizzed round the world—five sputniks of varying size, four American satellites, one British, one French. So intent were they on studying the motions of these eleven satellites that they did not notice the ships of the invaders stealing into the Solar System.

THE BIG news that Friday was not the invasion. The invasion went unnoticed. The big news was this:

The New York Times, August 14 1959

WASHINGTON, Aug 13—Defense Department officials indicated today that the United States will make an attempt to hit the moon with an unmanned missile some time during the coming month.

The announcement stems from the successful launching last month of *Daisy*, the 1100-pound instrument-carrying

Earth satellite. Defense Department spokesmen imply that the launching-rocket used to place *Daisy* in its orbit could easily send a missile to the moon. Presumably, the moon missile would be equipped with hydrogen warhead to provide visible proof of its safe arrival.

Considerable speculation in the Capital followed the disclosure. On Aug. 3 Radio Moscow declared that the Soviet Union was "preparing" a moon missile for "early launching." No date was specified. Washington observers believe that the United States will regain a large measure of its international scientific prestige if it becomes the first nation to reach the moon with an unmanned missile, and that an accelerated program toward that goal has been under way for several months.

WHILE THIS was going on on Earth, the real news of the Solar System was being made elsewhere. The Girrian invasion fleet, consisting of eleven super-light dreadnaught-class ships, armed with fusion bombs and atomic cannon, emerged from nullwarp in the orbit of Jupiter, after having made the ninety-one light-year journey from Girr in some sixteen weeks.

It was not so much an invasion of imperialism as one

of necessity. The Girrians were oxygen-breathing humanoids; their home world of Girr had been fairly thoroughly devastated three generations before by nuclear warfare. Although the warring factions had been reconciled and no possibility of future internal conflict remained, the planet had been turned into a charred and sterile ruin.

A new home had to be found. Residual radioactivity was playing hob with the Girrian genetic patterns. Sterility was overtaking them; they needed a new world.

They sent out scouts. The scouts covered better than a hundred cubic light-years before they found a suitable world.

It was the third planet of a small yellow sun. Gravitation was 1.006 Girr-norm; atmospheric content was virtually identical so far as oxygen was concerned. This world's air contained nitrogen instead of helium, but that would make no great difference.

The planet was inhabited by humanoids. The humanoids were in possession of nuclear weapons, but evidently had not used them in any large-scale military offensives yet, though preparatory tests were frequent. For the past two years the inhabitants of this planet had been sending up orbital satellites of increasing complexity, and

nearly a dozen of these were in operation now. But there was no indication that they had means of interstellar or even interplanetary travel.

Obviously, the time to strike was now, while these humanoids were still defenseless. Their planet was desirable, and they could be exterminated with a minimum of fuss. Later, it might be more difficult.

Let it be noted in passing that the name of the planet is not Girr, nor was the leader of the war-party under the command of Lord Garr. But this is the closest that our language can come to a translation of the aliens' names; and "Lord", although inadequate, is the nearest we can come to the commander's title and social position. If you can imagine the United States of America taking on titles of nobility for its political and industrial leaders and executives, without otherwise altering its social and political set-up, this will approximate the meaning of the Girrrian titles.

IT ARRIVED in the system of Sol on Day 81 of the Year Girr 11, 206. By Terran reckoning, that was Friday, August 14, 1959. On Earth, the weather was warm and humid; air-conditioners hummed and power-stations neared dangerous overload peaks. But the aliens, studying their potential planet

with thermocouples, couldn't have been more delighted. They liked it moist.

Aboard the flagship *Noble Garr*, Lord Garr of Girr and his captains met to work out final plans.

Youngest and most vigorous scion of the Garr family, the Lord Garr of Girr did not remember the Girrrian nuclear wars; he had always known a world of cinder-heaps and radioactive slag. He burned with determination to conquer this green and fair world of oceans and fertile plains in the name of Girr.

He was large for his race, standing nearly two meters high. His skin was thick and leathery, a golden-green in color—the color of the aristocracy. His captains were bluish-green; his soldiers of the line, nearly gray.

He said, "The conquest shouldn't take more than two or three days. We'll establish a base on that airless companion planet of theirs and drop a couple of megatonners on them. Gliiy, how's the semantic analysis coming?"

The linguist looked up at Lord Garr, and his eyes receded under their multiple lids in shame. "Not very well, I beg to say."

"Not well? How is that?"

GLIY LOOKED miserable. "We've been monitoring their radio broadcasts and trying to convert them into something we can understand,

but it's absolutely impossible. The language just does not stand up to any kind of rigorous analysis. For one thing, it seems to have about thirty variable grammatic constitutions, and a vocabulary so immense it's unbelievable."

Lord Garr of Grr nibbled his knuckles reflectively. He had been counting on the linguistic analysis; he had already written his ultimatum, and a fine thunderous-sounding thing it was too. The aliens would cower when they heard it in their own language, beamed at them from their dead companion-world. But...

"Is there *no* way of cracking the language?" he demanded stonily.

"None, sire. In fact..."

"Yes?"

"One of my assistants suggests that the impossibly chaotic state of the alien language is caused by the fact that it is not one language, but several."

"How can that be?"

Gliiy shrugged. "Perhaps this world has developed several languages. I know it sounds incredible, but that's what the evidence points to."

Lord Garr of Grr scowled malevolently, but he saw there was nothing to be gained by blustering. He had hoped to deliver his ultimatum—and, of course, it helped to know what your enemies were saying. But he was not expecting much resistance, in

any event. They would have to make do without knowing the alien language (or languages, as the case might be.)

"Very well," the noble growled. "Gliiy, consider yourself dismissed from the meeting. If you turn up anything new on their language, be sure to let me know. Now listen, the rest of you. We'll make our landing on that companion world of theirs..."

The New York Times, August 15 1959

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Aug. 14 (UP)—Strange radiation emanating from the moon is being detected by *Daisy*, the United States' largest and most sensitive orbital satellite. The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory reported in a special news conference that "definite electromagnetic radiation" has been observed by the satellite's instruments. The report of radiation began early this morning, said Dr. K. Harvey Allen, associate director of the observatory, and as of mid-afternoon showed no signs of abating.

The discovery gave rise to speculation that the Soviet Union might have landed a missile on the moon during the night. No comment was forthcoming from Moscow.

Meanwhile plans are pro-

ceeding for despatch of this country's first moon missile "shortly." No departure date was specified. A study is now under way to determine the cause of the unprecedented radiation detected by the space satellite.

THE GIRRIANS had made their landing without difficulty, entering the region of Earth under cover of invisibility shields. Lord Garr of Girr was slightly nervous. This was, after all, his first assignment, and it was a tremendously important one; he had his family honor to uphold. They would be waiting anxiously back on Girr for his report of success.

He tried to comfort himself.

It would be an easy mission, he thought, like shooting grelks in a barrel. The aliens had no spaceships and only primitive missiles; besides, the attack would come so fast they would never know what had hit them. All they would be aware of was that conquerors were among them, and that thenceforth they would have to bow the knee to the glory of Girr.

He looked at his aide-de-camp and said, "Fluur, there's no chance they can see us from down there, is there? They might have good observatories..."

"Not a chance, Excellency. Even without our invisibility

shields, they would have trouble seeing eleven ships, even such ships as ours, at a distance of better than thirty planetary diameters."

"But they can pick up the radiation from our shields, can't they?"

"Maybe. But it doesn't matter. They won't know what's causing it."

COMFORTED, Lord Garr forced a smile and ordered his spacesuit to be brought. He wanted to look down on this planet before the attack began. He wanted to see it in its unspoiled freshness, before the bombs rained down upon it from the launching platforms of the Girrian ships.

He donned the suit. They had landed inside a giant crater on the bleak, pock-marked world—which, he now realized, was no companion planet, but merely a moon of enormous size.

The eleven Girrian ships were arranged in a circle within the wall of the crater. Lord Garr emerged from his flagship and allowed himself to be lifted to the rim of the crater. From there, he stared out at the great green world whose reflected light brightened the dark star-streaked sky.

The new home of the people of Girr, he thought exultantly. A vision filled his mind: the alien beings driven into dark corners of the

world, and a triumphant procession of Girrian vessels bearing beings across space from the old ruined world to this glorious new one.

And all his doing; his conquest, his glory, his triumph. Lord Garr of Girr! I! Me! I!

He heard a tinny scrabbling sound, as of someone plugging in an input jack in order to make contact with him through his suit radios. He felt a twinge of irritation at being interrupted while contemplating his future dominion.

"Excellency, would you return to the ship at once? There seems to be trouble. Our mass detectors report a strange object..."

The New York Times, August 16 1959 (special edition)

WASHINGTON, August 15—The United States sent Moon Missile Number One streaking skyward late this afternoon in a secrecy-shrouded launching. News of the event was not released until after the successful launching; which took place at the Cape Canaveral, Fla., missile station.

A hydrogen warhead will signal to the world the arrival of the rocket, which will require eleven hours and thirty minutes to make the journey of approximately 240,000 miles. The Defense Department revealed that a "structurally

modified intercontinental ballistics missile" had been used in the test.

LORD GARR of Girr listened impatiently to his advisers as they pointed to the object on the radar screen.

"It's hard to tell, of course. The trouble with our invisibility screen is that it works two ways. But we do seem to pick up the track of something that might be a missile heading toward our base."

Lord Garr snorted. "How could they penetrate our invisibility shield? Why, technologically they're millenia behind us, and we don't have anything that can see through an invisibility shield."

"We can make out the shadows of objects of large mass advancing toward us," replied the technician. "And there seems to be something heading this way at considerable speed."

The phone rang. Lord Garr signalled for one of his aides-de-camp to pick it up. A moment later the man said, "Sire?"

"What is it?" Garr disliked these complications.

"It's the radiation-tracking lab, sire. They seem to be picking up emanations coming closer. They think it may be some form of enemy counter-attack."

"N o n s e n s e," Lord Garr thundered. Then he considered: "How long will it

take to break out the anti-missile missiles?"

"You ordered them stored, sire," an obsequious underling said. "But we could have them in action within—say, half a day."

"Good. Get them ready. We can't take any chances on such an important mission. And maybe—just maybe—we've underestimated these aliens."

The New York Times, August 16 1959 (second edition)

MOSCOW, Aug. 15 (AP)—A Soviet Moon Missile was reported launched from the Siberian rocket station shortly after dawn, Moscow time. If the Radio Moscow report is correct, the Russian missile should reach the moon within an hour after ours.

THE GIRRIAN base on Luna was in a hubbub of excitement. A frantic race against time was under way; the invisibility shields had been lowered for a fraction of a second, long enough to confirm the fact that a missile was under way from the supposedly defenseless world below.

A quick estimate revealed that the missile would be arriving in eighteen minutes—which was a good fifty minutes before any major Girrian defense could be rigged. Lord Garr of Girr broadcast en-

couraging words to his sweating crewmen, over an all-ship hookup.

"This alien missile is not to be feared," he shouted hoarsely. The old thunder was gone from his voice; he felt panicky. "It is not aimed specifically at us; perhaps it will land elsewhere. Perhaps it does not carry destructive weapons. Or, most likely, the destruction will affect some other area of the world we are on.

"And then, our retaliation will be massive. We will show no quarter. We. ."

"Sire?"

Someone was plucking at his arm.

"Can't you see I'm broadcasting, you fool?" he snapped.

"Yes, Excellency. Excellency, terrible news!"

Hastily Lord Garr cut the broadcast circuit. "What is it?"

"Sire, we've just detected a second alien missile—right behind the first!"

Lord Garr of Girr merely groaned.

The New York Times, August 17 1959

WASHINGTON, Aug 17—A double explosion rocked the Earth's oldest satellite today, as America and Russia fought to a virtual dead heat in the race to put an unmanned rocket on the moon. Eleven min-

utes after an American modified ICBM unleashed hydrogen-bomb fury on the crater Copernicus, a Russian missile blasted into the crater named Plato.

All eleven of Earth's artificial satellites recorded the assault on the moon. A tremendous flare of light was visible to watchers on Earth.

It was fourteen years and one month since the opening of the atomic era at Alamogordo, New Mexico, July 16 1945, with the detonation of the first A-Bomb.

The White House said: "Humanity has taken a giant step forward into space today. It must be the fervent hope of everyone that the next great move toward the conquest of the universe be taken, not competitively as this was, but jointly. We..."

IT WAS nineteen weeks after the departure of the invasion fleet from Girr. Grand Lord Garr of Girr was getting worried; his son was capable, but inclined toward overconfidence, and his sub-radio message announcing success was long overdue. Was it possible he had been defeated?

No, Grand Lord Garr thought. *Impossible!*

But still, he nibbled his knuckles and waited for the message to come.

The New York Times, August 30 1959

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. Aug. 29 (UP)—The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory declared today that the strange electromagnetic radiation detected by Satellite *Daisy* shortly before the double American-Russian moon blitz had totally disappeared.

"We don't know what caused the radiation and we don't know why it went away," said associate director K. Harvey Allen. "It vanished right after the two H-bombs landed, and we think there's some connection."

Research will continue on this outer-space mystery, Dr. Allen said.

And so the Girrian invasion was repulsed. It is quite probable that Earth's divided nations will never know that through their combined efforts they had successfully fought Earth's first interplanetary war, on a warm, sluggish day in mid-August of 1959.



READIN' and WRITHIN'

MACH 1, A STORY OF PLANET IONUS, by Allen A. Adler. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, \$3.00.

Use of the word "planet" as an adjective has always been a sure tip-off of grotesque ignorance in this field. Here is no exception.

From the jacket: "This is Allen Adler's first novel, although it was he who conceived the original story of *Forbidden Planet*. He produced a revival of *Front Page*, has written both original stories and screenplays for the motion pictures."

To get one misconception out of the way immediately, this is not a novel: it is a half-heartedly "novelized" screen story. The blank-faced characters stand up and speak their lines woodenly, without any perceptible motivation; characterization, explanation, depth of any kind there is none; the thing is a framework to be filled in by a producer, and a puzzle to be solved by a director.

As a screen story, it follows three tried and true principles, namely:

1. You can't beat the old malarkey.

2. Nobody but kids go to see these things.

3. Science is all double-talk anyway, so what the hell?

Operation Mach 1, at the San Diego Naval Base, consists chiefly of Admiral Buchanan, Commander Shawn, and Commander Jeb Curtis, all of whom spend most of their time shouting at each other nose to nose.

Also present are Lt. Janis Knight, meteorologist, and a civilian electronics expert, Martin Edmur. Martin likes Janis, but is too timid (after all, a *civilian*.) to be much competition for rough, tough Commander Curtis, a John Wayne type.

Mach 1 is a nuclear-powered torpedo boat, designed to exceed the speed of sound. It rides out of the water on a fin, and smooths a path for itself with a "tri-node" which emits "occulting current."

What is occulting current? "Well, it's much more powerful than either direct or alternating current. Its amperage can be made to build like an atomic chain. Its ray produces a peculiar molecular cohesion."

Blah. Well, Jeb takes *Mach*

I out on a super-secret test run, and disappears. So does Janis, who was on San Nicolas Island waiting for him. The Grid Space Mass got them.

I REPEAT, the Grid Space Mass. A space mass is a spaceship, only made of gas. It looks like "a monstrous clam composed of some form of tremulous gelatin." The Grid are people whose names begin with K. They come from "planet Ionus," and look just like us (fortunately for Casting), except for their multi-colored hair and eyes. When we first see them, they're like photographic negatives, but that's because they're "accelerated."

Jeb and Janis are probed by a device which "records" their molecular structures, because only things that have been "recorded" can pass through "the barrier," and be prepared "to withstand the speed of light."

Gug. So the Grid takes them to Ionus, which turns out to be a moon of Saturn; they learn that the Grid live in a big city thirty miles under the ice, because a monster named Karkong (out of Dr. Zarkov, by King Kong, I guess) had eaten up everything on the surface of the "planet." Karkong got to be the way he is by neglecting to discharge the "occulting current" which, by a funny coincidence, the Grid generate in their bodies.

Yikh. So Jeb and Janis look around and gather samples, and then the Grid takes them back to Earth in the Space Mass, to "'Demonstrate to your United Nations our need for atomic power.'" (To feed the monster.)

The monster, however, follows them back to Earth: there's a twist for you!

A POINT that seems to have eluded Adler is the energy required to propel a monster 700,000,000 miles at the speed of light. Since all the nuclear energy produced anywhere in the world would not do more than wet the bottom of that bucket, Karkong is like a fellow driving from Portland Me. to Portland Ore. to buy a half-gallon of gas.

Anyhow, Karkong shows up, "an inverted bowl composed of turbulent air" a hundred yards wide. He sucks up electrical energy wherever he finds it, blacking out cities; and he emits lightning bolts and leaves a charred path behind him, which also seems wasteful for an energy-hungry monster.

In spite of efforts to dismantle all atomic plants in his path, he gets a taste of nuclear energy and likes it (the flavor?); he accordingly takes off for Russia to find more. The Grid in their Mass and Jeb, Martin and Shawn in *Mach 1* take out after him; meanwhile Admiral Buchanan

dives out a window. Martin⁹ dies in firing the atomic torpedo which cripples the monster. (Karkong, now a thirty-foot tar baby, is felled by lightning bolts a little later, which does not make much sense but provides a sock finish.) Jeb gets the girl. The Grid go home. The End.

The Navy background, including the imaginary torpedo boat *Mach 1*, is competently handled and authentic-sounding. Two minor characters, Buchanan and a Mexican girl named Orquita, briefly show traces of life. The scenes of destruction (great for wide screen) are powerfully handled.

The rest of the book, including all the "science fiction" part, is so bad that ordinary epithets will not do. It is incredibly, stupidly, loathsomely bad. The science double-talk is not only meaningless but incoherent. The action has the frantic and addled air (and the idiot prurience) of a comic-book story. The style is pretentious, ignorant and vulgar.

Some bad science fiction books get published through innocent enthusiasm or incompetence. The publication of this one is an act of contempt for science fiction readers—and a slap in the face for every honest craftsman in the field.

OCCAM'S RAZOR, by David Duncan, Ballantine, 35¢.

This talented writer, who showed himself game but confused in two previous would-be science fiction novels ("*Dark Dominion*" and "*Beyond Eden*"), has produced a third in which his talent and his confusion are evident as before.

Duncan's forte is people: he sees them with an inquiring, ironic, compassionate but unsentimental eye. At his best, the characters he draws are sharply individual, each one believable and distinct from every other. He fills up the scene with these moving portraits, and their intricate mutual relationships, effortlessly handled, make his book.

Coming late to science fiction, Duncan acquired one fundamental misconception which is still hampering his work: he thought the subject of science fiction was mystery.

This is one of those half-truths that are sometimes more hurtful than falsehoods. "Mystery" as Duncan interprets it is a vast, cloudy unknown—a feeling of awe in darkness. That feeling is certainly at the back of every field of human knowledge, from physics to theology—an ecstasy of ignorance. But in front of it is the opposite, an ecstasy of understanding. In cosmology, for instance, we see "mystery" beyond the elegant and satisfying complexity of celestial mechanics.

In science fiction as in science, "mystery" alone is not the truth; moreover, it is not a thing that can be manipulated meaningfully in fiction. The unknown is the unknown; you can't elaborate it without explaining the mystery away; you can only state it, and in 70,000 words that gets damned dull.

Finally, as I'll show in a moment, this approach necessarily ends where science fiction has to begin.

AT A NAVAL BASE on Santa Felicia Island, Dr. Roger Staghorn keeps a complicated apparatus for the study of soap films. The base is the one where the first Moon rocket, *Luna One*, is being prepared for launching. Staghorn is on the premises because his specialty, the theory of minimal, has a bearing on the plotting of orbits. The excuse is pretty thin, but so are Staghorn and his soap films; both are fascinating. I spent a happy and incredulous half hour making wire frameworks according to the book's directions, and dipping them in soapy water. (How many planes of soap film will there be on a cubical wire frame? Six? Wrong—thirteen. Try it and see.)

Staghorn is a completely engaging character, a cadaverous scarecrow of a man with a compulsive rudeness toward authority. During a demonstration, he so pro-

vokes a torpid young ensign that when three films appear where only two are possible, the ensign breaks the extra one: and the anomaly refuses to repeat itself. Greatly upset, Staghorn goes back to his lab to tinker with the big soap-film machine, and from there the base psychiatrist, Cameron Hume, gets a phone call for help.

He finds the lab in darkness; two half-seen forms escape. Staghorn is lying in the apparatus, knocked out. When he comes to, it develops that he has amnesia, and can't tell anybody what happened.

Now we get a series of incidents in which other people see the two who mysteriously appeared in the lab; through these repetitive glimpses we learn that the man looks like the Devil and the woman like Eve. They are wandering around the base, obviously bewildered; the man has great strength and kills several people who try to stop him.

"The vital task," says the author on page 68, "was to learn the secret of their arrival on the island, to learn how they had passed through the radar and sonar screens and past a hundred electronic eyes without being apprehended." Now, please note that Staghorn's amnesia, that tired old trick, has been introduced here specifically to keep this question from being

answered. The author's purpose is to prolong the "mystery": but there is no real mystery for the reader, except the one which can never be solved, or even discussed, until the author stops pussy-footing around. The characters' endless wrong guesses about what the reader already knows are boring,* and the only suspense takes the form, "When will Duncan get on with it?"

THE HORNED MAN is trapped and leaps to his death; the woman is captured. She is beautiful, and Hume falls in love with her. This is routine, but Duncan's deft touch gives it some freshness. Meanwhile, Staghorn comes out of his amnesia just in time to prevent the novel from bogging down forever: he tells his story on page 117, about sixty pages too late. The strangers came through one of his soap films from another plane; time as we know it is a train of temporal quantas and in the intervals between them there are other such trains—other universes existing side by side with ours. This is not an unfamiliar idea in science fiction; what is new is Duncan's gaseous and self-contradictory exposition of it. As in

"*Dark Dominion*", Duncan gives the uncomfortable impression that his science is too deep, not for the reader, but for the author.

The rocket-site background of the story, which has been entirely useless until this point, now gets some attention: when the dimensional crossing-over occurred, there was a momentary suspension of time, which has bollixed up *Lune One's* "built-in timing calculators" (i.e., set its clock back half a second); this, Duncan tells us stoutly, will take "about a month's work" to fix.

It further appears that the same thing has happened to other rockets in preparation all over the world, and that other nations are hopping mad about it: there is an ultimatum, an admiral's plane is shot down by a submarine, and war is about to break out any moment.

AGAINST THIS wholly-unconvincing background, Staghorn repeats the experiment which brought the two strangers through; the C. O., who has just finished telling everybody that under no circumstances will he let the girl be sent back, lets her be sent back, and it turns out that the shock of the second crossing-over has knocked out rocket missiles all over the place, and nobody has any weapons to fight a war with. Hume, who might have been a little quicker on the draw,

*From page 90: "It was strange, under the circumstances, that so far no one had suggested that the woman might have come from another planet." Yes, indeed.

is thinking that he will go through the doorway next time, to "kneel at Lael's feet and ask for the right to remain in that land of freedom until he had won his horns and could clasp her to him forever."

End of book: beginning of story.

Under the aspect of "mystery," a plot has one basic assumption which is not revealed until the end: when the assumption is revealed, mystery vanishes, the book is over. Under the aspect of science fiction, a plot *begins* with its one basic assumption. "Mystery" is the question: science fiction always tries to give the answers.

"Mystery" can never really tell a story; it can only prolong a literary striptease as much as possible. A story is **what** happens—in the last analysis, we always see that in a "mystery" nothing has happened.

Duncan's assumption—alternate universes—is not new but is by no means worn out, either. The idealized pastoral world of which he gives us a glimpse or two looks moderately interesting; at least it would be fun to see if he could reconcile the wildly-conflicting elements he has built into it. The question he poses could lead to any number of interesting answers: What happens after communication between worlds is established? What adventures

would an Earthman have on Lael's planet? Or: what would be the effect on our society of another accessible, inhabited world? Or (this one is hinted at in one tantalizing chapter, and then dropped): What does our world look like, seen through Lael's eyes?

The direction a story takes is up to its author; the only unforgivable thing is to mark time on the point of departure.

EARTH IS ROOM ENOUGH, by Isaac Asimov. Doubleday, \$2.95.

Here we have fifteen stories, plus two Gilbert-and-Sullivan parodies, one fair, the other awful ("politics" is rhymed with "shady tricks," "Galaxies" with "fallacies"). Of the stories themselves, "Someday" is an elegant exercise in indirection, with a real chill at the end; Asimov uses the notion of a story-telling computer simultaneously as gadget, as plot device, and as symbol: the result is like three fists in one glove. "Dreaming Is a Private Thing" is equally subtle and rich; again, growing from the gadget-as-gadget, we get a plot extrapolation, and two intensely moving portraits, all packed into the same unity of place and time. One of the portraits is borrowed—the wise old Jewish movie producer—but can never have been done with more charm. The other is a

Dreamer (read: writer), and I think he is new. Writers in stories are usually either formless clouds of self-pity, or else wisecracking young collar-ad models with their neckties pulled loose. This one is seen from the outside, with unblinking honesty, and yet with warm, tragic understanding.

Nine of the other stories are pot-boilers, hackwork of varying degrees of mediocrity. That leaves four, of which "Satisfaction Guaranteed," about a robot Prometheus and a human Galatea, might have been first-rate except for its wooden characterization.

The other three are all marred by the same curious incompleteness. In "The Dead Past," a time-viewer turns out to be equivalent to a spy-on-your-neighbor device. Attempts to suppress it for this reason fail. In "Living Space," bug-eyed monsters show up on supposedly uninhabited alternate-probability Earths. In "Jokester," aliens are discovered to be testing us by means of folk humor. In each case, the story begins where Asimov stops: when privacy becomes impossible, when the monsters arrive in the interplane suburbs, or when the aliens who run this planet are unmasked—what happens next?

SOLOMON'S STONE, by L. Sprague de Camp. Avalon, \$2.75.

This short novel, from *Un-*

known, is a nostalgic reminder of the kind of smooth, expert tale de Camp used to spin in the early 40's. Via a bungled experiment in black magic, it takes a near-sighted C.P.A. named Prosper Nash into a world of day-dream figures. Each inhabitant is somebody's wish-I-were—cowboy, pirate, spaceman, etc. De Camp is cheerfully irrelevant and logical in everything from the tools of magic (he uses "virgin typewriter paper" instead of parchment) to the social ills of a community in which everybody is what he wants to be. As in Baum's "*Tik-Tok of Oz*", there are more general officers than anybody, so a Private has the supreme command. There are Interplanetary Patrolmen, but no Interplanetary Patrol, because there's no interplanetary traffic. "So, as the first step, we formed a company to build a cosmobile. But there was the usual trouble everybody wanted to be boss. They're splendid fellows, but they just couldn't realize that the management belonged to me, because of my natural gifts of leadership."

Nash, as "Jean-Prospere de Neche," is an uneven mixture of the dashing chevalier and the methodical accountant. In a moment of emergency, he may find himself automatically skewering a footpad; [Turn To Page 120]



Novelet



POSTMAN'S HOLIDAY

At first, it didn't seem as if it would be too hard to find out the canker eating at the heart of Mogden IV's culture. But Simmons found that the answer wasn't obvious...

by Charles V. De Vet

SO FAR, all the signs were minor; but they were very definite. Mogden IV's culture hovered on the brink of disaster.

One final time Simmons lay the sheets of mouskin graph paper one atop the other. The pendulum curve on each paper fitted neatly over the curve beneath it.

Slowly, with his mind deep in thoughts, he picked up the papers in one hand and pushed back his chair. Down a long corridor he carried them, and through a door marked:



Ivan E. Wallace
Coordinator
Sociological Engineering
Bureau

Wallace looked up as Simmons entered, his bland features widening into a smile. "Good afternoon, Jules," he

greeted. "I got your call. You sounded as though you had come on something pretty important."

The bland expression, Simmons knew, was a facade, covering a deceptively acute intellect. He laid the papers in

his hand on the desk in front of Wallace. "Look these over, will you, Ivan? See if you arrive at the same conclusion I have."

Wallace took up the papers, reading the heading on the first as he did so. "Cultural trends on the planet Mogden IV." He examined each paper quickly, but thoroughly, before he looked up. His expression was quizzical.

"Now put them together," Simmons directed.

WALLACE did as he was told. His eyes widened as he observed the super-imposed curves fitting neatly, one over the other. "Trouble," he murmured.

"Complete breakdown imminent," Simmons corrected.

"Beyond a doubt; we'd better send their government what you've found immediately."

"That would be as futile as expecting a man to psycho-analyze his own neurosis."

"Do you have something better in mind?"

"I have nearly two months accumulated annual leave," Simmons said, apparently irrelevantly. "I'd like to take my vacation starting today."

Wallace pushed the papers aside and picked up a yellow pencil. He did not raise his gaze from the desk as he revolved the pencil slowly between his fingers. "One of the articles of the Ten Thou-

sand Worlds Charter," he said, "stipulates that no World is to interfere in the internal affairs of other Worlds."

"I am aware of that," Simmons answered.

Wallace drew a deep breath and let it out slowly. "If I were asked to recommend a man for a job of this kind," he said, "I would unhesitatingly choose you. You have the special kind of ability that goes above and beyond the scientific method. I suppose I would have to call it 'intuition.'"

HE PAUSED once more, and seemed to be searching for the exact words he wanted. "However, you have this other quality also, which can hardly be regarded as an asset." He cleared his throat in semi-embarrassment.

"If I weren't your friend, Jules, I would not presume to speak to you like this," Wallace said. "But you perhaps do not recognize the quality in yourself; you are an idealist. And in following your ideals you are inclined to be impractical. What you are contemplating might very well be a fool's errand: The odds against your being able to help are great. I say that, despite the respect I have for your ability. And there would be grave danger; if you meddle, you are bound to step on some toes. And their owners are very apt to be powerful

and ruthless men. You could easily lose your life."

"Possibly you're right," Simmons answered. "And I appreciate your concern. But there are some things a man sees that he must do. Will you arrange for my leave?"

"I won't ask why you want it," Wallace said. "But if you intend what I presume you do, I would advise that you at least give it more consideration." He raised his hand as Simmons opened his mouth to speak. "If you go to Mogden, and attempt to help them, you will be completely on your own. Officially I won't even remember that you spoke to me about it."

Simmons knew where the conversation was leading. He gave Wallace his opening. "As a private citizen I believe I am entitled to spend my vacation wherever I wish."

"TRUE." WALLACE pulled down a thick leather bound book from a wall shelf at his elbow. He leafed through it rapidly until he found what he sought. "Mogden IV," he read. "A single continent planet on the outer fringe of the Orion's Belt sector. Area of habitable continent 253,721 square miles. Population 251,000,000. Originally colonized by a French dissenter group. Retains many French customs, as well as French based language. Soil fertile. Exceptionally productive fish and

sea food industry. Exportable products minor—despite this apparent general abundance. Nothing much other than vitamins of sea plant extraction, and collectors' curios. Tourist trade negligible. Minimum contact and intercourse with outside Worlds." He looked up. "Not much to go on. And one would have trouble finding a ship putting out for Mogden IV."

"That's right," Simmons agreed.

"It just happens," Wallace said, narrowing his gaze meditatively, "that I have a friend in the curio import business putting out a ship within a short time. He intends to touch Mogden IV on his first stop; he might be induced to take a passenger."

"I'd need about three days," Simmons said. "To pack, and to use the language machines."

"As it happens my friend is due to leave in exactly three days," Wallace observed.

EARTH'S envoy on Mogden IV received Simmons with an ill concealed lack of enthusiasm. His name was Baldwin Brown, he informed Simmons, and he would be happy to give any assistance necessary. However, he would have to be excused from small talk, as his time was strictly limited.

The man was older than he should have been for this rel-

atively minor post, Simmons noted. Apparently he had risen as high in his service as he was ever going to. That might account for his air of curt civility.

Brown mixed a drink for Simmons, and one for himself, wrote a brief note—which, with Simmons' letter of credit from home, would establish an account at a local bank—and made a call for hotel reservations. When he filled his glass a second time—before Simmons had half finished his—Simmons knew that his first estimate of the man as a frustrated dead-end-er had been correct.

"You will find that your money has much greater purchasing power here than it had at home," Brown said.

SIMMONS had expected as much. With the universe made up of 95% hydrogen, and helium comprising the bulk of the remaining 5%, only a very small proportion was left for the heavy elements. With the perfection of faster-than-light *Spacebridge* and—in the course of twenty five centuries—the colonization of over ten thousand planets, Earth had turned out to be a non-typical speck of heavy-element impurities. All metals now were precious, and Earth was extremely wealthy.

"However," Brown continued, "it would be wise to draw out no more money at one

time than is necessary for your immediate needs. The native counters gradually lose their value with time. That may seem absurd to you, but I am convinced it is a more ideal commercial technique than our own. Here money circulates, and wealth is subject to little accumulation in the hands of a few. Real property is the only means of acquisition. Now if you have no further need for my..."

"There is one thing you can do for me," Simmons interrupted. "My visit here is strictly personal. However, my work at home is sociological engineering. We have discovered some facts relating to Mogden's culture that should prove of quite urgent concern to them. I would appreciate your giving the information to the proper authorities." He explained, as simply as possible, what he had found.

Brown agreed to the request with little apparent interest.

ON THE WAY to his hotel, Simmons stopped in at the local bank and drew out a thousand francs for current expenses.

At the hotel he unpacked, showered, and sent for a city directory.

He spent a short time searching for the name of someone with a profession similar to his own. Under the heading "Economist" he

found the name Justin LeBlanc. The man also carried the sub-title of 'Psycho-therapist.' A rather unlikely combination by Earth assumptions, but Simmons expected to find much here that was unlikely by Earth standards. He called the phone number listed and secured an appointment with LeBlanc for seven that evening.

That left him three free hours. And he wanted to waste no time. His investigation of Mogden's social set-up should begin as soon as possible. And the best method would be personal contact.

He knew that he would be doing a risky thing, mingling with the inhabitants—with the little knowledge he had of their customs and mores; but he wanted no escorted tour—and he had come expecting to take risks.

IN THE MIDDLE of the first block Simmons stopped at a clothing shop and bought a tight-breached suit of many colors, which the shopkeeper assured him was the height of local fashion. A yellow and red striped cloak completed his attire. The flat pistol in his shoulder holster did not bulk out under the cloak. He left the shop and continued down the brick street that curved gently to his right.

Simmons had not gone far before he lost all sense of direction. Mogden's capitol

city's streets were laid out in the form of wheels—with a central park as the hub of each wheel—and diagonal streets connecting each rim. This may not have seemed complex to the natives, but it thoroughly confused Simmons before he had walked four blocks.

The buildings of the city were all built of varied colored brick and plastic, or combinations, none of them being over three stories high. From the observation port, as his space ship landed, he had noted that the buildings were bunched closely together, and extended as far as he could see in every direction.

One resolution he had made before his sojourn into the city. To strictly mind his own business. Despite anything he might observe. The mores of a strange World such as Mogden IV, with little outside contact, they were bound to differ even more than normally. The easiest way to become involved in trouble would be to interfere in anything he observed. His role, he decided, must be one of alert passivity.

SIMMONS was not to keep his resolution long. Within the first quarter hour he found himself walking behind a man as tall as himself, but whose shoulders were so broad that he appeared stocky. The man carried himself with an air of quiet, undeferential assurance.

Simmons was inattentively speculating on the man's occupation, noting without considering that two pedestrians walked toward them, and that a gray haired old man poked with a stick at refuse at the entrance to an alley they were approaching. And when it happened Simmons was too stunned to move until it was over.

The tall stranger ahead of him twisted suddenly sideward and clutched the old man about the shoulders. With his right arm he circled the scrawny, whiskered neck and forced the man's head back.

The oldster yelled once and kicked out frantically, spinning his attacker half around. As they faced him Simmons saw the gray haired one's mouth open wide in the extremity of his pain, but no sound came from the straining lips. The tall man jerked back his right arm with sudden ruthless force, and Simmons heard a dull crunch.

He watched in shocked fascination as the old man's body went limp and slid slowly down the front of his slayer.

THE TALL man's face had held its same expression during the entire brief encounter. There was no anger or hate there, nothing except a determined efficiency. Now he looked down for a minute before he walked on.

Simmons came out of his

stupor and looked quickly about for someone representing the law of the city. The only other persons in sight were the two men he had seen approaching earlier. They had watched the killing with little more than cursory interest, and now they moved on down the street.

With no thought for himself—only his indignation spurring him to act—Simmons drew the flat gun from his armpit and strode after the killer. He pushed the nose of his gun against the broad back ahead of him and gritted, "Keep walking!"

The other hesitated for only an instant before obeying. He turned his head and looked at Simmons over his shoulder. "Do I know you, sir?" he asked.

"You don't," Simmons answered curtly.

"May I ask where you are taking me?" he inquired.

"To the nearest policeman," Simmons replied.

The tall man hesitated again, then shrugged and went on.

THEY FOUND a green clad policeman around the next corner. "This man has just committed murder," Simmons told him.

The green-clad raised his eyebrows slightly. He regarded the tall man and seemed to observe something about his dress. "A commissionaire?" he asked.

The other nodded. He drew a paper from his breast pocket and handed it to the officer. "My warrant," he said. "You will find it signed by Peerre Delfac, the dead man's second son."

The officer handed the paper back. "I will have the body collected," he said. "You may go."

He turned to Simmons. "I judge by your accent, sir," he said, "that you are a stranger to our World. Allow me to assure you that this man's activities, which you have just witnessed, were perfectly legal." While his words were polite, his attitude was one of impatient tolerance. And in his eyes was the only partially concealed look of dislike for a foreigner.

"Is it legal on this World to kill a defenseless old man?" Simmons asked sarcastically.

The policeman shrugged with cynical indifference and walked away.

II

THE TALL man had not left as the policeman talked. Now he said to Simmons, "Our police are not sympathetic with what they regard as interference by outsiders, but I do not wish to appear as a monster to you. Will you allow me the pleasure of buying you a voyage?"

"Why should I drink with you?" Simmons asked gruffly.

"For no reason," the tall man answered, "except, perhaps, to have your curiosity satisfied."

Oddly, Simmons found himself almost liking the man; and by now he realized that he had somehow made a fool of himself. The other was probably evidencing great tolerance by treating him so civilly. Further, he needed to learn all he could of the local customs, as quickly as possible. This might be as good an opportunity as any. "I will accept your offer," he said, not quite able to match the other's courtesy.

"My name is Andrew Harris," the tall man introduced himself, and bowed as Simmons gave his own name.

They walked side-by-side, without speaking further, until they passed a building that was obviously a drinking place. "Isn't this one of your taverns?" Simmons asked.

For a moment, Harris seemed startled; then he smiled. "I forget that you are ignorant of our customs. This is a place of the Fishers. One of your obvious station does not drink with Fishers."

This time, Simmons remembered to restrain himself from asking questions that might make him appear ridiculous.

A few doors beyond they came to another drinking place and entered.

THEY FOUND a table against one wall and sat down.

"Two brandies," Harris told the waiter who came to take their order. The place, Simmons noted readily, was much like Earth taverns.

"Now if I may be permitted to clear myself in your eyes," Harris said, holding his voice in a question.

"I wish you would," Simmons answered.

"On Mogden it is the duty of a son to kill his parents before they are too old. Most of the sons do not desire to perform the disagreeable task themselves. My profession is one known as commissionaire. We perform such unpleasant duties for others. I was committed by a man named Delfac—the old one's second son—to kill him."

"But what is the purpose of such senseless slaughter?" Simmons asked.

"Purpose? I know no purpose. Except that it is done—and it is recarn."

"What does that mean?"

"Recarn? The old person will live again in the son's next-born."

"Then the expression must come from reincarnation," Simmons mused. "Tell me, is that belief universal with you?"

"Of course," Harris answered. "At least until recently. Of late years a semi-religious sect, headed by a man named Georg Graetin, has been preaching against it. Graetin has succeeded in convincing quite a large number

of persons that the 'duty' is cruel and ungodly. His influence grows daily. There are even rumors that the Council is soon to accede to his demand that the practice be stopped. But the great majority of us regard him as an irresponsible fanatic."

"I'm afraid I agree with Graetin," Simmons commented.

"DO NOT YOU Earthians believe in recarn?"

"No," Simmons answered. "And by every instinct and moral code we have, your killing of your old people is bloodthirsty and barbarous."

"If I knew your customs I might regard many of them in the same light," Harris said.

"That's true, of course," Simmons agreed. He recalled guiltily the killings on Earth made legal by wars. He decided to drop the subject. "May I ask you a question? Perhaps at the risk of violating your privacy?"

"My pleasure is yours," Harris replied.

"Is your profession looked upon as...decent by the others of your World?"

Harris drew a thin cigar cube from a breast pocket and appeared thoroughly preoccupied with rounding it by rolling it between his palms, and lighting it. Nothing in the steel-like courtesy of his manner seemed changed as he spoke, yet his tone was gentle and dead as he said, "My pro-

fession is regarded with envy by those without the courage to adopt it."

"I'm sorry," Simmons said, instantly realizing that he had made another mistake. "I meant no offense."

Abruptly Harris' reserve broke, and he smiled wearily. "Do you Earthians ever feel the great need to talk?"

Simmons nodded and waited, sensing that what this interesting man had to say would not be commonplace.

"**I** HAVE NEVER spoken like this to anyone before," Harris said, "simply because there was no one to listen. No one that would understand, and not regard me as a weakling. But I find myself admiring your frankness, and I perceive a good thinking mind behind your questions. I will tell you how I regard myself.

"Every man has within him that which he is. The coward buries it, that he might not have to face its obligations. Or he expresses it only by surrender to the invigorating lunacy of herd action. The brave man follows this thing—though he may know he will die sooner for it.

"My work is dangerous: Few commissionaires ever reach the age where their sons must give them recarn. Yet I do not claim to be a brave man. I have the desire—the inner need—to do those things which frighten most

other men. I might state it by saying that I desire to live as if I were to die the next moment; that alone will satisfy me. By placing my life so that it is always in danger I find alcoves now and then that give me flashes of the stimulation I must have. And I am happy in the admiration I know I receive from those about me."

Harris relaxed in his chair. "Now that I have told you this about myself do you see me as a vain fool?"

"Not at all," Simmons answered. "While I may not agree with the way you follow your star, I admire your courage in doing it."

THE DRINKING place had gradually filled as they sat talking. Simmons noted that women and older girls mingled freely with the men.

Two women came up to their table as they talked and stood waiting expectantly. One was small and blonde, with meager beauty. The other was built on heroic proportions, with a skin fair and untinted, and hair combed in black waves to the back of her head. Her breasts were only partly obscured by a stiff cloth cowl that hung over them. "Are you gentlemen expecting?" she asked.

Here, as on Earth, Simmons reflected musingly, young maidens hunted in pairs. He grew aware that Harris and

the girls were watching him, watching him, waiting for him to make the decision. He smiled uncertainly at the dark girl and said, "Thank you for asking. Perhaps later."

She lifted her shoulders in the universal Mogden gesture, and the two girls walked away, swaying their hips gently as they went.

"Would you not enjoy being in jostling harness with the bounteous one?" Harris asked, with a slight quirk at one corner of his lips.

Simmons felt himself reddening slowly. "I'm a married man," he mumbled, feeling stiff and prudish as he said it.

Harris' face registered surprise. "Is fidelity to one's wife considered a virtue on Earth?"

"It is professed," Simmons answered uncomfortably.

"**I**F I WISHED to look for absurdity in your customs I could point to that," Harris said. "It is our firm belief that chastity is a dangerous abstinence. It makes a man vulnerable to illness of the liver." His small smile returned. "Fortunately, our women do their best to keep us free of liver complaint."

Simmons smiled back. "How do your wives feel about that?"

"Our wives? If they do not like it they are wise to keep the silence. A husband has the right of life or death over his wife."

Incredible, Simmons thought, but after a moment acknowledged to himself that such alien practices were to be expected here.

"You asked me if my profession was considered decent—at the risk of offending me," Harris said. "I will take the same liberty with you. We consider that those who restrain their desire for women do so only because theirs is weak enough to be restrained."

Simmons bowed with good grace. "On our World we would say 'touche.'"

When Simmons left for his seven o'clock appointment with the economist-psychologist, LeBlanc, he felt that he had made his first friend on Mogden IV. He was startled to remember that, by his own standards, the man was a merciless killer.

SIMMONS hired a cart drawn by a razorback Mogden pony to take him to the address LeBlanc had given him. He asked the driver to wait when they arrived.

LeBlanc met him at the door. He was a thin man, with a contrasting wed-fed face and jowls of fat at his jawbones. His expression was one of habitual melancholy, but his greeting was cordial.

"Come in," he invited. "I am happy to meet you. I do not often have the pleasure of an outworlder for a guest."

He led Simmons to a parlor

in the house and—making a small ceremony of it—mixed drinks for them in a large glass bowl. As they drank they exchanged small talk.

At the end of a half-hour Simmons managed to turn the conversation to the purpose of his visit and he told LeBlanc what he had learned of Moglen's danger. "I thought perhaps you might have some information that would give me an idea of what could be wrong," he concluded.

"I can't start to think of what the trouble could be," LeBlanc said. "I can, of course, give you any amount of statistics—trade trends, commercial activities, and such that you might want. But what there could be in those figures that would indicate the danger to us I don't know."

"You have a democratic form of government, do you not?" Simmons asked.

"Ostensibly, yes," LeBlanc answered; "but we haven't had an election—in fact—since before I was born. Our Council replaces members lost by death or superannuation with picked candidates, running without opposition. I'm afraid you would have to call it an oligarchy."

"However," he went on, "it is a benevolent oligarchy, and our citizens are quite well satisfied with it. If you are thinking of a discontent of the people being the disturbing factor you are mistaken."

"I wasn't really thinking of anything," Simmons answered. "I'm merely searching desperately for some clue."

"Tell me this," LeBlanc said, "what could you do if you did find the trouble? To avert the disaster, some action would have to be taken, wouldn't it. Do you feel capable of handling it alone?"

"If I gave the facts I found to your government they would take the steps necessary to prevent the disaster, would they not?"

LeBLANC thought that over for a moment before he said, "I'm not certain that they would. Rather, I doubt that you could convince them of the necessity. As I understand it, when you find what you are after, it will be something that affects the government, or at least a large segment of our society. The Council is composed of quite conservative men; I don't believe you'd convince them very easily to do anything radical."

"Then I might be able to avert the trouble without their help," Simmons said. "When sociological engineering first reached the degree of proficiency where we were able to foretell these disasters, the prevalent theory was that a counteracting force should be inserted into the culture. When that was done it not only proved to be a tremendous task, but—sur-

prisingly—more often than not it was unsuccessful, for reasons we have not yet been able to determine. Our later research indicated that usually one group—or even one man—in a special position, could be the direct cause. Removing them, or him, is like loosening the king pin in a log jam.”

AN HOUR later, LeBlanc looked at the clock on his study table. “I’m sorry that I must halt this interesting conversation,” he said. “Unless...” He paused. “Are you interested in psychiatry, M. Simmons?”

“Very much,” Simmons answered.

“I have been treating a Fisher who has the illusion that he is the illegitimate son of a Councilman; I believe I have the data necessary to complete the cure this evening. Would you care to stay and watch?”

Simmons was happy at this opportunity to further observe the Mogdenian social functioning. “I would appreciate your allowing me to stay,” he said. “I’ve heard these Fishers mentioned before. Just who are they?”

“They are the dregs of our civilization, M. Simmons.”

“Criminals?” Simmons asked.

“Not necessarily; they are merely a class of people on the substrata of our social order.”

“I didn’t know you had a class society.”

“We don’t,” LeBlanc assured him, “but the Fishers are different. They are called Fishers, incidentally, because of their work. They are prohibited by law from changing occupations, or marrying with others, and have interbred for generations. They have always been the least desirable group in our society.”

“But why are they discriminated against? Are they inferior in some way? Less intelligent, for example? Or is fishing regarded as degrading work?”

“Of course fishing is degrading. But I suppose their average intelligence is the same as the others of us.”

“Then why aren’t they given the opportunity to work in other trades and professions?”

“Why? It just isn’t done, M. Simmons.” LeBlanc was obviously becoming annoyed. “I suppose if you must have a reason, there is no outstanding one. But their deficiencies are legion. They lie, they steal, they have little honor—even among themselves—and their personal habits are often reprehensible. They are the lice of our civilization.”

Simmons prudently decided not to argue further.

THE FISHER was young, not over eighteen. Though Simmons’ nostrils told him the lad needed a bath, he had

fine, sensitive features, and large intelligent brown eyes. He sat in a straight chair, opposite the divan on which LeBlanc and Simmons sat, and kept his gaze mostly on the thick rug at his feet. He pulled continually at the edge of his cloak—which LeBlanc had not asked him to remove.

"His name is Michel," LeBlanc said. He treated the lad with obvious condescension, and did not show him the courtesy of giving his first name, or of introducing him to Simmons.

"Do you still believe you are the son of a Councilman?" LeBlanc began his questioning.

"I'm certain of it," the young man answered.

"Why?"

"I feel it."

"That is hardly proof."

The boy did not look at LeBlanc, nor raise his tone, but his voice was stubborn. "It is proof enough to convince me; such a strong feeling cannot be false."

"Wouldn't it more likely be a feeling prompted by your desire to better your station in life?"

Michel was silent.

"You have a fair education," LeBlanc said conversationally, "and I find your intelligence quite above normal. In fact, you showed your good sense by coming to me to be cured of your neurosis."

"I have no neurosis," Michel answered evenly. "I

came only because my mother asked me."

"THAT IS your trouble," LeBlanc said. "Your mother loves you, but she loves you too well. She has sheltered you from the hardships and problems with which you should have learned to cope before this. Now, when you are too old to lean on her any longer—when you must earn your own livelihood—you are unable to accept the fact. You hide behind this delusion of a higher birth."

Again Michel was silent.

"I ask you this," LeBlanc resumed his questioning. "Will you look with an open mind at the proof I will try to give you that you are mistaken in your belief?"

Michel nodded, doubtfully.

"Do you know which of the Councilors is your father?" LeBlanc asked.

"I only know that it is one of the four."

"Do you know the appearance of those four?"

"Very well."

"Will you tell me what is the color of their eyes?"

AFTER A moment of thought Michel answered. "They are all blue."

"Do you know the appearance of the Councilors' wives?"

"As well as I know that of their husbands."

"What color is their eyes?"

By now Simmons understood where LeBlanc's questions were leading. Michel, apparently, did not. He answered readily. "They are all blue also."

"And the color of your mother's eyes?"

"Blue."

"Yet your eyes are brown!" LeBlanc delivered his declamation. "It is impossible for two blue-eyed parents to have a brown-eyed child."

Michel's gaze swept up in a movement in wild consternation to stare at LeBlanc; Simmons pitied the despair he read there then. But LeBlanc went unmercifully on. "Your father's eyes are brown. You could have naturally been his child, and you are. Never doubt it."

Michel cried out with a strangled sob, and ran from the house.

III

WHEN SIMMONS left, late in the evening, M. LeBlanc rode with him in his hired pony-cart for the first half-mile. It seemed it was the custom on Mogden for the host to accompany his departing guest on the early part of his journey.

Simmons was made acquainted with still another custom when LeBlanc rather diffidently asked him if he would care to exchange cloaks. The wearing of a col-

ored cloak in the evening was considered very bad taste. The exchange would cause him no inconvenience, LeBlanc explained, as he owned several of each type, and if he wore Simmons' cloak on his short walk home, he would hardly expect to meet anyone at that hour of night.

AT HIS HOTEL, Simmons unlocked the door of his room—and found that the place had been torn apart!

Bed sheets and clothing littered the floor, and bureau drawers had been turned over and their contents spilled out. At first Simmons assumed that some sneak-thief had broken in, but counters of native coin had been spilled out on the bed and left laying there. What could the intruder have been after?

It took a brief inventory to locate the missing articles: The sheets of graph paper with their marking of Mogden trends! But who had wanted them, and why? Simmons could not arrive at any satisfactory answer.

With a deliberate effort, he dismissed the matter from his mind. He had other problems that needed his immediate consideration. He straightened the room and stretched out in an easy chair and gave himself over to reviewing what he had learned and observed during his short time on the planet. Neatly and orderly he laid his facts out in

his mind, as an accountant would set his figures in a ledger.

He had, first, the killing of the old man by Harris. Next, the system of monetary depreciation. The infidelity of husbands—though that was not as peculiar to Mogden; in practice, as it was in theory. The husbands' life and death control over their wives. The subjugation, if not the actual persecution, of the Fishers. He made a mental note to investigate that more fully when he had the opportunity. And finally their conservative, benevolent, oligarchic government. Which was not unusual.

A rather extensive list. In reviewing them, the Mogden custom of killing their elders held his interest the strongest. But whether that was the element that threatened their civilization, or whether it stood out because of its blatantness—and the fact that he had been a graphic witness to its functioning—he did not know.

HE COULD add to the list of what he had learned the information he had gathered before he left Earth: Mogden's one land mass large enough to be classed as a continent, with an area of approximately 50,000 square miles. The remainder of the planet consisting of ocean, and infrequent islands of barren rock; all human life sub-

sisted on the one continent—a population slightly in excess of 250,000,000. He paused and calculated the density of population, 5,000 per square mile. Very high. However, this was counterbalanced by the fact that the land was extremely fertile, and nearly half their food could be gotten from the fructuous sea.

After a few minutes of consideration the thought came to Simmons that the cause of Mogden's danger might be over-population—despite the productiveness of its land and sea. A seeming paradox on these colonized Worlds, was that the more productive the World the more tendency it had to reach the point where it could no longer support its inhabitants. In an environment where the means of livelihood were easy to come by there was bound to be a high birth rate. And inevitably there came the time when there were more people than could be fed.

Conversely, a World deficient in the means of subsistence was usually held to slower rate of propagation by the scarcity of goods, and the proportion of energy that had to be expended toward bare existence.

He would need more time for consideration, and perhaps more facts. One especially: did Mogden have a problem of over-population? He would have liked very much to have the statistics on it.

Would it be possible to obtain them—this very night? Sometimes—with his intuitive approach of intangible problems—the answers came to him while he slept. He might wake up with the answer to Mogden's problem solved—provided he had all the necessary facts.

FOR A TIME, he was tempted to take out fresh graph paper and search for the solution in the generally accepted statistical manner. That was the way it had to be done by those researchers without his peculiar gift of intuition. But they had no choice. Intuition could not be defined, nor could it be taught.

He discarded the idea of graphing with little consideration. The statisticians failed, when presented with such a problem as this, because they could not operate effectively in a situation where a crucial point is concealed, or unknown—as it was here.

Intuition, however, operated in a different manner, and brought generalizations distinctly different from the statistical. Intuition, or instinct, or insight—it had many names—is what first led to belief. Later, reason confirmed or refuted—that which intuition had suggested—by comparison with other beliefs no less instinctive, but supported by greater experience. If it proved compatible it was

accepted as knowledge. And now, as always, intuition must come first.

For the immediate present, Simmons needed information on the degree of undernourishment on the planet. Where to get it? The answer was obvious. LeBlanc. Would it be too late to call him? Simmons' reasoning and mental drive were at high peak now. He couldn't sleep anyway, and he might be on the verge of finding his solution. He decided to risk an imposition on LeBlanc's amiability.

A-WOMAN answered Simmons' call. He never did learn who she was, but he presumed later that she was the economist's wife. "May I speak to M. LeBlanc, if he hasn't retired, please?" Simmons asked.

"The woman's voice sounded as though she had been crying. "M. LeBlanc is dead," she answered wearily.

For an instant Simmons was unable to speak. It wasn't possible, he thought. "You must be mistaken; I left him only an hour ago."

"You are M. Simmons, the Earthian?" the woman asked. "He was killed just as he reached his home after leaving you." Her voice broke and she hung up abruptly.

Simmons slid slowly back in his chair. LeBlanc dead. Could this World be mad with its blood-letting? Or was there something different

here? Could it be that the killing of LeBlanc had to be placed in a different category from the others? Was this murder—as atypical to Mogden as it would have been to Earth?

The evidence he had—all strictly observational—pointed to the conclusion that it was the latter. Who, then, could have killed LeBlanc? Michel? Hardly likely. Though the lad might feel he had justification, he was hardly the homicidal type.

As he pondered Simmons' glance chanced to rest for a minute on LeBlanc's cloak, laying across the foot of his bed. His back straightened.

The cloak!

He had exchanged cloaks with LeBlanc; LeBlanc had been killed while wearing his, Simmons cloak—shortly after; he had found his room ransacked on his return. The clues totaled, as plainly as the multiplying of two and two made four. The killers of LeBlanc had made a mistake. They had meant to kill Simmons!

But who were *they*? He had no time to speculate on it. Every minute he wasted now made his danger more acute. And there was so little he could do to counteract that danger. Should he run? To where? Should he fight? Whom did he have to fight? And how could he, alone, hope to hold his own against an unknown enemy, with

probably infinitely more force at his command?

Simmons heard a small noise in the hall outside his room and was glad that he had locked the door. He rose and put out his light. Walking to the room's one window he looked out. Across the street a man, faceless in the dark, stood with his head turned up toward Simmons' window.

The net was already tight around him!

He needed help. Badly. He had one chance to get it. Harris.

HARRIS answered Simmons' first call. Evidently the man was a light sleeper. "I'm in danger," Simmons spoke hurriedly. "Will you help me?"

"But certainly," Harris answered briskly. "Where are you now?"

Simmons told him. "I found my room torn apart when I came in tonight," he added. "And a short time ago the economist, LeBlanc, was killed while wearing my cloak. I'm convinced that they meant to kill me. Watchers are stationed outside my room now."

"Do you have any idea who they are?"

"No."

"No matter. I will reach you within one third hour. Do not permit anyone to enter until I arrive. Use your gun if necessary." Harris cut the connection.

Simmons groped in the dark for his chair, and let himself drop into it. Only when he tried to relax, and noted the unnatural rigidity of his stomach muscles, did he realize that he was afraid. He was glad to note that it was not the fear of panic. He took the safety catch off his pistol and laid it on his lap, and waited.

Twice Simmons heard movement in the hall, and once someone stealthily tried the knob of his door. But they made no attempt to force their way in.

Eventually there were three short raps on the door and Harris' voice said, "Open up."

SIMMONS crossed the room and let him in.

"We will have to move fast," Harris said. "Are you ready to leave?"

Simmons nodded.

"Good," Harris spoke rapidly. "I saw two of your shadows in the lobby downstairs, and another in the hall. I do not know who they are, but I'm certain that they recognized me. That may help. I have some small reputation in situations like this. And we have surprise on our side: the surprise that you are not alone."

As he spoke he opened the door and looked out. He motioned with his hand and Simmons followed him into the hall.

"Keep your gun in your

cloak pocket," Harris instructed in an undertone. "With your finger on the trigger. When we come to them, keep them covered. And make certain that they know you are doing it."

A man at the far end of the hall slid behind a turn in the corridor as he saw them approaching.

"Steady," Harris cautioned Simmons.

At the head of the stairs Simmons looked down and saw two men blocking the passage at the foot. Obviously Harris saw them also, but he never paused. Purposefully he walked down the stairs toward the waiting men. Simmons noted then that Harris, too, had one hand in a cloak pocket.

When he reached a point one step from the waiting men, Harris stopped. "Get the hell out of my way," he said very gently.

Involuntarily the two men stepped apart. As they stood undecided Harris strode between them. Simmons followed.

Outside they climbed into a pony cart which Harris had left waiting and rode away.

"We're safe, at least temporarily," Harris said. "These men are underlings. They will have to await instructions from their superiors before they will know how to cope with the change in the affairs."

IN HARRIS' apartment they held a hurried council, with Harris doing most of the planning and talking. "Our immediate problem is for a method of concealment," he said. "And it can't be here. By now they will have associated you with me. For you I must make the disguise."

He walked to a wall cabinet and began taking down assorted jars and tubes and small instruments. "While you hide I will seek to learn who desires to kill you. When we know that, we will decide whether it is wiser to attempt negotiations, or to move against them. For now, rest your head back against the cushion of your chair." As he spoke he put the jars and tubes on a table at Simmons' right.

For fifteen minutes Harris' deft fingers operated on Simmons' face. He began by plucking hairs from the middle ends and upper sides of his eyebrows to change their slant. Also with the tweezers he changed Simmons' hair line to a widow's peak. He rubbed a pale yellow cream on his fingers and ran it through the hair until it separated into short ringlets.

Using a small cosmetic gun he sprayed a flesh-colored paste that hardened instantly across the bridge of Simmons' nose and into the hollows of his cheeks. He pushed small air filters into Simmons' nostrils that gave them a wider

flare. "Those give you the look of the sinus one," he jested, without pausing in his work. Finally he covered Simmons' face and hands with a lotion that tinted the skin several shades darker.

"You now have the appearance of a Fisher," Harris said when he'd finished. "It will do.

"I HAVE A secret exit," he said, "for use in just such emergencies as this. It will let you out two blocks from here. The Fisher section is directly East. Start for there as soon as you get outside. It is only about two miles and you can walk. Once in the district you will have no trouble renting a room in a private home. Stay close to your room until noon tomorrow, when I will meet you at the main wharf, if I am ab'e. If not we will meet there the second day. You will have no trouble finding the wharf." He led Simmons to a door in the basement, shook hands briefly, and let him through. "Keep to the right," he cautioned.

HARRIS was not at the wharf the next day when Simmons arrived. But he was not worried; he had developed a great confidence in the man's ability.

On the way back to his rooming house he stopped at a used-book store and bought several Mogden histories.

He found Harris waiting at the wharf when he reached there the following noon.

"I have found what we sought," Harris greeted him, "and you are in the worst possible trouble."

"That I suspected," Simmons answered. "But who is trying to kill me? And why?"

"Your death was ordered by the Council itself."

Simmons considered that for a moment. It was not too surprising—in the light of what he had learned from Le-Blanc about the Council. Another thought occurred to him.

"How about you now?" he asked Harris. "With your government on the other side, do you still wish to work for me?"

"I learned more—why you are here," Harris said slowly. "I am a citizen contented with the Council, and loyal to them. But their persecution of you is prompted by their timidity, rather than their reason. They are malefic, when they should display gratitude; I will remain on your side."

"I hesitate to accept your help, if it means you must operate outside your law," Simmons said. "They would never permit you to escape punishment for opposing them."

"I have already weighed that," Harris answered. "The Council is taking great pains to keep their connection with

your avowed demise a close secret. They are afraid of the vigorous protest your death might incur from the Earth authorities. And we commissionaires work under a code that is quite specific as to the activities in which we can and cannot engage. If I, in their presumption, do not know who your enemies are, I cannot be held to account for protecting you against them."

"I'm glad to hear that," Simmons said. "Do you have any plans for my future moves?"

"I have those," Harris answered. "I do not understand how you know there is the danger to our World, but I have great faith that you are a competent man. I have arrived at the decision that the best means of concealing your person—and at the same time advancing your investigation—is for you to go to Graetin."

"Graetin?"

"The leader of the group I mentioned to you that is in opposition to the putting away of the too old."

"Will he accept me?" Simmons asked.

"He will. I visited with him during this morning, and explained the situation of yours. He evidenced a great sympathy. I am to take you to him."

IV

GRAETIN was a man with the face and figure of a bull. His outstanding features were large

ears and great bony cheeks. His manner was abrupt and forceful, and he had the trick of looking at a visitor from under eyebrows pulled down into a scowl. Simmons learned very soon that he valued his own opinions very highly, and consistently monopolized every conversation.

"You have come to the right man," he informed Simmons as they relaxed in his drawing room. "You want to know what is wrong with Mogden IV. I can tell you. It is a sick World, suffering from a neurosis that compels it to draw the blood of innocent victims. You probably know already of its senseless slaughter of ancient ones. Do you know also that husbands frequently slay their wives—for any pretext, or none at all—without violating any law? And that within the last few years the self-styled elite have initiated a new custom of slaying every third child at birth? And what do the authorities do about this latest atrocity? They do not admit that it is permitted, but they condone it by refusing to punish the offenders. Is not the blood madness apparent to you?"

"I agree with you that they are not practices of which to be proud," Simmons began. "However. "

"They are reprehensible!" Graetin interrupted. "I am not a provincial person, M. Simmons, bound by the mean

prejudices and bigotry of this rustic World. I am much educated, and wealthy, and I have traveled on nearly two hundred Worlds. And I tell you the taking of a man's life is a violation of basic morality, and cannot be justified by calling it a local custom. If there's a God, I say He must hate us for what we do."

"I WAS GOING to say," Simmons tried again, "that while I am in sympathy with you on nearly everything you mention, I do not believe you have the solution. I was able to secure a few of your history books within the past few days and I find that the custom of killing your elders began well over fifteen hundred years ago. And husbands assumed mortal control over their wives a few centuries later. By now, those practices have become set characteristics of your culture. The threat to that culture, which we seek, must be some new force—a man, a practice, or an institution—which by its nature clashes with the culture's established pattern, and threatens to destroy it."

"You would know more about that than I," Graetin said. "But I will wager that anything you find will lead back to this blood letting. Have you yet marked any symptoms that might indicate the danger?"

"Nothing concrete. But

there are some aspects of your society that I would like to know more about. For one, your World's religious beliefs. I would guess that their teachings quite closely parallel yours."

"**YOU ARE** wrong, there," Graetin replied. "In fact, their engrained religious philosophy has been the greatest hindrance to my cause. That philosophy might be stated simply thus: *'It is as easy for the strong to be strong as it is for the weak to be weak.'* You can see the devitalizing futility of such a philosophy, can you not? The malefactor cannot be held morally accountable for his wicked deeds, because he is too weak to resist doing them. And there is little incentive to do good, for it will merit no praise. That is merely exercising one's strength. "And " Graetin paused, seeming to enjoy what he was about to say, "That philosophy is even older than the customs you mentioned."

Simmons pondered for a time. "Again I am in complete agreement with your views," he said. "Now, perhaps, you can tell me something about the Fishers. How long have they suffered their persecution?"

"Nearly as long," Graetin replied. "But of course that can have nothing to do with the danger. It is a normal thing; one must expect it."

"Why do you say that?" Simmons asked. "I would think a man with your background and sympathies would recognize the injustice of that suppression."

Graetin pushed out one arm in a gesture of brushing the argument aside. "The morality of it is too minor to concern me," he said, "so I will not argue with you. I was considering merely its political aspect. You must know that the best way for a government to secure social solidarity is for it to acquire a war. There are no wars on Mogden: We have a universal government. The second best means of securing that social solidarity—especially for a government exercising absolute authority—is to have an oppressed minority. You can find many instances of it in your own Earth's history. Back in your middle ages you had the Jews under Hitler; the bourgeois under Stalin and Lenin; Papists under Protestants; and heretics under the Catholics. The Fishers are ours."

Simmons had to admit that the man was learned—he might even be forced to admit that he was wise. But the oppression of the Fishers stayed strong in his mind as a vital clue.

THE NEXT few days, Simmons had other discussions with Graetin, and learned more of the cultural

background of Mogden IV. The man was obstinate and more dogmatic than he himself realized, but he was a thinking man, and his interests extended to many fields.

During those few days Simmons gave the problem of Mogden's imminent disaster much deep thought. By this time, he was certain, he had all, or nearly all, the facts he needed. Any day now some small occurrence or conversation would supply the stimulus that would trigger his intuition, and the answer would come tumbling out.

Many times he thought of the Fishers, and how they fitted into the pattern, especially when his intuition seemed bubbling just beneath the surface of his mind, waiting to break out. Somewhere there, he was positive, lay the vital clue. Often he wondered about the young Fisher, Michel. He still remembered the look of stark despair in his eyes when LeBlanc had shattered his hallucination.

Twice daily he received phone reports from Harris, and was assured that his hiding place was still a secret from his pursuers. However, Harris warned him each time not to leave Graetin's house. He had too much ignorance of the small habits and daily behavior of the Mogdenians, Harris insisted, to risk exposing himself. Simmons agreed—but each time more reluctantly. He was safe

where he was, but he was making no progress with his larger problem. His helplessness was slowly building up to a gray frustration.

On the third day he could wait no longer. The thought of the boy, Michel, had been pricking at his consciousness like a thistle burr in a thumb, and he had to find out what had happened to him. He decided to risk a visit to the Fisher district.

SIMMONS had some acquaintance with the wharf sector and decided to begin his inquiries there. "Do you know a man named Michel?" he asked a passing Fisher.

"There is a Michel who owns a boat at the end of that small pier," The Fisher answered, indicating the pier with a nod of his head.

"Thank you," Simmons said. As he turned to walk on he noticed, without attaching any significance to it, that a young Fisher, in a blue, open-necked, sweater had stopped to listen to their conversation.

He found the man named Michel mending a strip of net. "Are you related to the boy who was a patient of the psycho-therapist, LeBlanc?" he asked.

"The young one was my nephew, sir," the Fisher answered.

"And how is he now?"

"He is dead, Monsieur. He killed himself on the night he last visited M. LeBlanc."

Simmons experienced a brief moment of shock—and his intuition moved with an almost tangible meshing of mental gears. He knew the danger that threatened Mogden IV!

SIMMONS had walked back the length of the pier before he became aware, consciously, of what he was doing. And then it was because his intuition operated again, sounding a sharp note of alarm. He stopped and looked around. The only person near him was the Fisher in the open-necked blue sweater.

With an effort of will Simmons forced himself to let his glance pass over the Fisher with no display of interest. He weighed and measured the man with that glance and walked slowly up the street bordering the wharf sector.

At a store front with an oblique glass he observed his own reflection, and his heart sank as he saw the Fisher ten paces behind. His last doubt was gone. They had found him!

Danger acted as a mental stimulus and he knew he was thinking as clearly as he ever had in his life. All was not yet lost. If he kept moving, his pursuer would have no opportunity to put in a call and report his find—without losing him. And Simmons knew where he must go to be safe.

The international spaceport.

In the early days of interplanetary travel one of the main sources of stress and dissension had been the landing fields of the ships of space. So many wealth-hungry governments had laid custom and import duties on their fields—to be reciprocated in kind by punitive taxes of other governments—that both trade and amicable relations had been threatened. The trouble was resolved by placing the fields under international jurisdiction. Violators were subject to the penalty of isolation. The restrictions were rigidly observed.

If he could reach the spaceport Simmons knew they would not dare come after him. And he felt fully capable of coping with this one man, should he attempt to stop him.

But Simmons' mind, despite its instinct for safety, would not cease its sharp functioning—and it carried his actions to their logical conclusion.

By fleeing, he was abandoning Mogden IV to its doom. And just at the moment when he knew what had to be done to save it.

Could he place his own safety before that of an entire World? Slowly his stride shortened, until he turned abruptly aside from his goal. He would return to Graetin's house.

Once in the building, he went to the nearest phone and

called Harris. He was fortunate enough to find him in. He talked for several minutes. After he finished he put in a quick call to his bank.

SIMMONS made his way up the stairs and into Graetin's study. He found Graetin bent over his writing desk, underlining passages in a black-covered book.

"Good day, my friend," Graetin greeted him.

Simmons nodded soberly. He walked to a window facing on the main street and sat on its ledge. Against the gray brick building across the street the blue-sweated Fisher leaned negligently.

Simmons had trouble beginning what he had to say. It was so difficult that when he did begin he found himself trying to reach his vital matter by a subtle, circuitous play of words.

"There is a beautiful and enlightening world of talk," he said to a Graetin so puzzled and impressed with the gravity of Simmons' manner that he was forgetting to frown, "in which everything makes sense. And there is another world—a more practical world—that is governed by the unintelligibility of necessity."

"What are you trying to say?" Graetin demanded irritably.

Simmons sighed deeply. "I am trying to say," he made his effort again, "that I have

admired your zeal, I have enjoyed conversing with you, and that I am grateful to you for hiding me. But now the time comes when I must oppose you. And if you do not accept what I command without struggle, I must fight you. Perhaps even kill you."

Graetin's scowl returned while Simmons spoke. "You have said too much, M., not to say more."

"Then I will be blunt." Simmons abandoned any attempt at subtlety. "You are the entity that is the threat to Mogden IV!"

GRAETIN strode toward him, his face turning a mottled red. "You. " For the first time in Simmons' experience Graetin was at a loss for words. •

"You are a damned fool!" Graetin choked. He reached out and grabbed a fistful of Simmons' blouse collar and twisted it with violent strength.

Calmly, with both hands, Simmons forced the fist to loosen its grip. "I will try to explain," he said, "by telling you a story. A story of a Fisher boy who had a neurosis.

"His name was Michel," Simmons went on as Graetin stood over him with his shoulders hunched and his body bent into a half-crouch. "He was sensitive, and intelligent. So sensitive and intelligent, that he could not bear the

knowledge that he was doomed to a life of degradation, menial work, and the scorn of others actually no better than he. And without hope of ever being able to escape his fate. This boy invented a story—which he believed himself—that he had actually been born to a higher station.

"You, as a learned man, will recognize what had happened," Simmons said. "Most insanity and neuroses are the same. A man is unable to cope with his environment, so he invents another world where he is someone better. On Earth the insane imagine they are semi-legendary figures, such as the general Napoleon, or the statesman-philosopher Jefferson."

"Get on with it!" Graetin rasped.

"A psycho-therapist cured the Fisher boy of his neurosis. He was not wise enough to realize that the neurosis was the boy's shield against a world with which he could not cope. There was only one escape left. The boy killed himself."

SIMMONS glanced down into the street. Two men had joined the Fisher in blue. And another group was gathering farther down the roadway. He looked back at Graetin. The burly man's scowl was still on his face, but it was strained now. As though it were fighting against some recognition.

"I think you see the simile," Simmons said. "You were right when you said Mogden's blood-letting was a neurosis—a planetary neurosis. But that neurosis is also its protection—as Michel's was his. The environment Mogden cannot face without its neurosis is over-population. Over-population, with its unfavorable relationship between man and his environment, brings wholesale destruction of planetary resources, hunger, revolution, war, and wholesale extermination.

"And you, Georg Graetin, are the psycho-therapist trying to cure that neurosis!"

Simmons looked into the street where more men were gathering. When he turned back Graetin was slumped in a chair. The light of anger was gone from his eyes, and a double chin had appeared on his face.

SIMMONS knew he was being cruel, but he had to finish what he had to say. "I hope that I can trust to your good reason to abandon your endeavors," he said. "But I must be certain. I've made arrangements with a bank to supply Harris with any money he might need to accomplish a task. That task is to kill you if you persist in your efforts."

Simmons made one attempt to soften the damage to Graetin's crushed ego before he left. "There are other ways

of continuing your fight—safely,” he said. “You can strive for a means of limiting Mogden’s births. It would be practical then to fight the forces that bring death—after you have interfered with the forces that bring life. That would be a very fine substitute for the killings that are necessary now.” He paused, but Graetin had nothing to say. “If, when I am gone, you decide to follow my counsel I will await with interest any correspondence you may wish to have with me. And for now goodbye and good luck.”

Graetin did not raise his head as Simmons walked out of the room.

study the ride with Harris to the international spaceport was almost an anti-climax. Once again Harris used his weapon of surprise, by riding a swift Mogden pony through the men surrounding Graetin’s home. Simmons was waiting, and sprang on the pony Harris led, and they were away before the Council’s men realized what was happening.

Three hours later Simmons rode in the spaceship cutting its way through the thin envelope of atmosphere surrounding the planet Mogden IV.

His vacation was over.

After the scene in Graetin’s

————— ★ —————

★ **Next Time Around** ★

Theodore L. Thomas is back next month, with a problem novelet, and a neat problem it is. Given intelligent, high-level civilization Martians, who are virtually indestructible, what do you do when one of them wantonly kills an Earthman? Not perhaps—deliberate intent to kill, but total disregard for the possibilities of injury.

Kelly Freas has painted a lovely cover for the light-touch “Constabulary Duty”, by Cal Knox. And you’ll find that the second part of “Tower of Zanid” is no letdown.

Repeat: *next month*; better reserve a copy of the June issue at your local newsstand. If your newsdealer cannot obtain copies, please let us know.



RESEARCH TEAM

by Don
Hinkle

After fifteen years the team was ready to go home. But had they learned what they'd come to learn?

THE BANKER came from New York, the streetwalker from Shepherd's Market in London, the mechanic from Oklahoma City. A police sergeant came over from Los Angeles, and they all met the female Russian physicist on a hill at night.

They were all drawn to that certain hillside in northern Italy, near a stream that ran down from the mountains to feed the grape orchards below. There they had parted fifteen years before—had watched the ship that brought them leave silently in the middle of the night and had then parted—each with the silent command within him that would bring him back to that place at the appointed time.

It wasn't until each of them saw the other four that total awareness returned. Then they recognized one another and knew that the ship would land in fifteen more minutes.

For a few seconds, each was stunned.

The banker said, "I...had forgotten."

"We all had," the girl said. "We had to, or we wouldn't have been able to find out the lives of people as we have."

No one there could have noticed it, but she glanced in her pocket mirror and saw that the sneer on her mouth and the dark lines under her eyes were gone. She didn't say anything about what she

had discovered, because she knew the others were finding sudden differences in themselves too, now.

"You know," the banker said. "For the first time in I don't know how long, I feel as if I could eat, well, anything I had a mind to." He patted his stomach. "Worries, worries. Lord I'm glad it's over. All over," he repeated unconsciously as he looked up at the dark night sky spattered with stardust.

The mechanic squatted down on a rock worn smooth by the stream and time and set a match on the bowl of his pipe. He felt complacent. He thought about the human wife and the five children he had left behind—she would probably be calling the cops, he thought, although she knew he would not willingly desert her—and for a moment he wished that he could change things and go back to them.

"It's not been bad at all," he spoke aloud as the tag end to his thoughts.

The girl laughed bitterly at him. "It's not been bad," she mimicked. "Lor', you sound like a bloody limey."

She looked at the people who formed the irregular group. "It's been hell. All of you look inside yourselves and you'll see that's true."

Nobody said anything; they saw that she had more to say. She dropped her handbag on

the ground and put her hands on her hips defiantly.

"I've found out what life is," she declared. "It's nothing but failure—irregular failures, maybe, sporadically interrupted by small successes, but in the long run there's only one big failure. That's life. You...decay."

She stooped, then, to get her compact, saw in the mirror that her sneer had returned. It had never left, she realized.

"Look at me," she told them loudly. "This is how life handled me. That's proof isn't it?"

THE COP from California looked at her closely. "It's funny, because even when I know who you really are, you look like a thousand other girls I've seen in the lockup." The girl turned her face to one side to avoid his stare.

"Well," she said angrily. "How did it look to you? All of it, I mean."

"I haven't seen all of it," the policeman said quietly. "I've seen the seamy side, like you, but my viewpoint was different. I...don't know quite how I looked at it. I guess I never really thought too much about it."

He hesitated, scratching his head, then went on: "Life isn't based on intellect—I know that. The smartest ones are sometimes the dirtiest—inside. Some of them do rot. No, it's more a feeling you

get; it's in your emotions. I guess I always knew somehow that there were better things to be had. I wanted to have them, and wanted other people to have them, too—which is why I was a cop. Of course, I did some wrong things in that duty." He stopped for a breath, not self-conscious, but trying to analyze himself scientifically.

"There doesn't seem to be any direct wrong and right. You can't hear that and believe it. Lots of people think there is, and they try and change life to conform to the way they've learned to think about it.

"I'll tell you this," he said. "I never did feel happy, supremely happy, the way I had"—he pointed—"there, before this." But he thought about that statement and found it wrong.

"No, I take it back. I have felt happy, but it was a different kind of happiness from anything I ever knew up there. It wasn't blissful, peaceful happiness; it was tinged with the sorrows and failures of a billion people like yourself, and my own small failures too. And it was never a thing I could depend on—that happiness—because it came and went at such small intervals that I never knew whether it would return. And it was something that I never noticed until now. Looking back on it." He stopped, feeling that he had

perhaps talked too long, wanting to hear the others.

The woman physicist spoke their language now. The Russian in her voice was gone into the past. She said thoughtfully: "I've fed a worm with my soul for years. If you never thought about anything, you were all right. You could work and drive away some of the fears; but they worked on you, too, and you never knew it because you thought you could escape yourself. I think that's how it was."

There was silence while the mechanic on the rock puffed his pipe.

Then... "I never knew love," the woman physicist added. "I was afraid of it, afraid of what it might do to me, how it might change me. More than that, I knew inside that it would cause me to face myself honestly. I needed love, but I couldn't bear to do that."

The mechanic sighed. "Love is the end and all-being of life," he said, as if he might have just realized it. "I found it. And once you have, you can't bear to leave it behind."

"You can't stay," the girl said quickly.

The mechanic nodded. Then he smiled at her. "You were afraid of love, too. No, don't tell me that you gave men your love. You gave nothing really of yourself, because you were afraid that

you had nothing worthwhile to give."

"Maybe you're right," the banker said quietly. "I had a wife. But we didn't give love to each other, never could even pretend that we did as a matter of fact. I could never say that I had 'made love' to her, only that."

"And the more they hate themselves, the more they use that word," the cop said, nodding. "It's written on fences and latrine walls all over the world by people who are afraid of the connotations which love has."

"That's what I've been trying to say," the girl remarked. "Look at all of them. Dirty on the insides, I've met them all and I know. They pick at each other's souls like they pick their noses." Her voice boiled with anger. "I'll tell you this: if they could truly see themselves like we see them, they wouldn't want to stay alive."

The banker said. "You talk as if we all see life the same way. That's you talking, not us."

THE GIRL twisted her face with disgust. "Look at you. Field researchers. Scientists, and you're still covering up your feelings with your human self-lies. I learned to face reality a long time ago. I had to."

"A lot of girls like you commit suicide," the cop said.

"I've seen them. It wasn't pretty."

"Nothing about life is pretty, nothing." She went on, "I cut my wrists once but a boy...a man, really...saved me. For awhile I thought I loved him but he was just like all the rest."

"And you've just admitted where you failed," the other woman said. "For that short time you tried to live because you had been so close to death. You were afraid of yourself."

"But they all are!" the girl cried aloud, surprising them.

The mechanic thought for a moment. "They are, if they let themselves die; there's fear in everyone, of course. But it's when you don't want to fail that you live. I lived." He sighed again. "I wish I could have one more cold glass of beer."

"That would taste good," the girl said, and then wondered what she had been thinking of when she said it. The mechanic just smiled at her, warmly, as if they had shared something close.

For a moment then, a patch of stars was obscured and the dark ship settled to the ground gently in a clearing near them. The mechanic got up from his rock and saw the others watching the ship intently.

"They won't come out," he said. "They'll wait for us in there."

Each person, then, turned

around and looked down at the orchards below them in the valley. A blue mist was forming; the sun would rise before long.

"Well," the banker said briskly. "We've got a lot of work ahead of us. Formulating our reports, until we find out exactly what life is."

They started together in a group for the ship. An opening formed in it's side, ready to receive them.

"Funny how that ship looks like a womb," the cop said. "It gave birth to us here, and now we're returning to it."

"Life hurt a lot," the woman physicist said.

"You can't hate them," the banker said. "You have to envy them, because they stick it out. And they've been here for a long time."

"Not because they stick it out; not for that," the mechanic said. "Because they own it. You'll miss it. Before long, you'll feel a pang in your soul that cries for a return to it. Because it was

here that you tried yourself and found a little happiness somewhere; and you always searched for more, knowing that it was ahead of you. If you can't try yourself, if you can't search in *yourself* and find a realization there, then you haven't lived."

And for some reason, the four of them glanced at the girl.

She was poised on the ramp leading into the ship like a small frightened bird. She turned her head this way and that, undecided.

Her eyes were wide as she said, "I feel like something's tearing me apart inside! I want to go in there—it's safe there, a kind of warm. But I can't. I need to stay here... try," she blurted, a sob in her voice.

The mechanic knocked out his ashes on the ship's hard skin, and laid the pipe gently on the ground behind him.

"Then you've found it," he said.

Don't Forget...

Science Fiction Stories now appears every month. Reserve your copy now, at your local newsstand!

the
logical
life

A Fable
of
Futurity

by Charles E.
Fritch

IN THE YEAR 1957 there were convertibles.
In the year 2057 there were helicopters.

In the year 2157 there were spaceships.

Bedrooms have always been around, but spaceships often proved more effective. When a guy runs out of uranium a million miles from the nearest planet, it's a long walk back—even for an ambitious young lady in a spacesuit.

It was because of this fact that the twenty-second century saw the birth of one Jonathan Fast, whose mother had forgotten her spacesuit one cold Saturday night on a date with a fellow from Mars, and couldn't walk back if she wanted to. Jonathan's birth was not only unplanned; it was pretty much of a surprise. He determined that he himself would lead an orderly, logical life to make up for this haphazard beginning.

Which he did.

Example: When he decided the time had come for him to be married, Jonathan didn't trust his choice to emotion; he submitted detailed questionnaires to the most likely prospects and after carefully examining the data thus compiled, chose a half-dozen semi-finalists whom he invited, one by one and on successive nights, into the privacy of his bachelor apartment; he was quick to recognize the importance of compatibility in marriage.

This was typical behavior, for he liked to think of himself as a reasonable man, and he would go to any lengths to uphold his beliefs. If you managed to convince him that black was white and white was black, he'd defend your thesis to his grave. On the other hand, if you were too unreasonable to see the truth, he might defend *his* thesis to *your* grave.

IT WAS inevitable that Jonathan Fast should join the military space fleet, and that he should become captain, for men of firm decision are needed in such positions. However, it was not inevitable that while his space craft, *Reasonable I*, was cruising through the asteroid belt, minor repairs became necessary. Captain Fast accepted this happening in his usual stoic manner and logically directed his three-man crew to land the ship on the nearest hunk of rock that would accommodate them.

This they did, and it astonished even the good captain to discover not only breathable air present but green grass as well. It may have surprised him, but he certainly did not dispute the evidence of his senses. Instead, he made extensive tests on the unlikely substances, and he even breathed some of the air and ate some of the grass. Finally, there could be no doubt of it; they were the real things.

"But it can't be," the navigator protested. "Grass and air here on one of the asteroids? Impossible!"

Captain Fast looked at the man coldly, drew his service pistol, and shot the navigator squarely between the eyes.

"A man who refuses to believe when indisputable proof is submitted," the captain said self-righteously, "is not rational and is better off dead."

The two remaining crew members agreed, and the captain holstered his pistol.

WHILE THEY were outside, walking about the ship and estimating repairs, a young girl came over the crest of a nearby hill and stood looking at them. She was without spacesuit, dress, or any other manner of clothing.

"One of the natives," Jonathan deduced, staring at her with more than scientific interest.

"Yahoo!" the girl cried suddenly and bounded toward him on all fours.

So astounded was Captain Fast by this unexpected maneuver, he hadn't the presence of mind to dodge the attack; the native girl bowled him over.

"This," he explained to his men, seemed to need some sort of explanation, "is apparently some sort of welcoming ritual they have here. We must not offend the natives by refusing to take part in their ceremonies."

He was silent during the next few minutes, concerned with the task of not offending this particular native.

WHEN SHE had finished the ritual, the girl wandered off to other diversions. Captain Fast struggled to his feet and hastily brushed off his clothing.

While he was doing this, two horses came into sight.

"Yahoos," one of the horses said, by way of recognition.

"But what are they doing here on our eating land?" the other wondered irritably.

"Talking horses!" the radioman said, eyes bugging. "I can't believe it!"

Despite his surprise at this new development, Jonathan did not forget his duty. With a regretful sigh, he shot down the radioman. Then, sizing up the situation, he turned to the nearest horse. "Take me to your president," he said.

"You speak a thing which is not, Yahoo," the horse said. "No doubt you are from the planet Earth."

"That," Jonathan Fast admitted, "is true. But how did you know?"

"We came from Earth, too, many centuries ago. My ancestors spoke of one such intelligent Yahoo as you who visited them long ago; he called himself Lemuel Gulliver."

"*Gulliver's Travels*," the captain said, remembering his childhood reading of the

book. "In one of the stories he went to a land inhabited by intelligent horses called Houyhnhnms and unintelligent humans called Yahoos. So you're a Houyhnhnm."

"Yes," the horse said, looking over the captain's shoulder. "When you Yahoos started exploding atom bombs all around our island, we migrated up here. Why is your mate sneaking away?"

CAPTAIN FAST turned and saw his first-mate disappearing through the spaceship door. He wondered how the Houyhnhnm knew rank, but another thought troubled him.

"I don't know," he said, answering the horse's question.

He found out, however, when the ship's engines roared, and the *Reasonable I* blasted off the asteroid and out of sight.

"Mutiny," he mused, accepting the fact. "I'm afraid I'll have to impose on you for awhile," he continued, turning his attention to more immediate matters. "I seem to be stranded here."

"Of course," the horse said graciously. "You are welcome to our hospitality, if you will also accept our customs."

"Which means," the captain said, excavating a cliché, "that when in Rome I must do as Romans do. And since horses are the superiors here.."

The horse nodded.

JONATHAN FAST considered this, and with it the possibility that no one might ever land here and rescue him. He might spend years—perhaps even a lifetime—on this asteroid, and he certainly could not oppose a society of intelligent horses. Of course, there was the consolation of the female he'd encountered, and there were probably hundreds of others he hadn't encountered (yet!)

who were just as well shaped, and just as friendly.

To be indecisive was to be only half a man, and to be half-Fast did not appeal to him.

He shrugged and with a quick motion in the light gravity hoisted one of the Houyhnhnms to his shoulders. "Well," he said, waiting for further orders, "that's a horse on me!"

Readin' and Writhin'

(continued from page 83)

but when he has leisure to think, his mind still runs to neat columns of profit and loss. In the best traditions of the farce-adventure, the story makes good use of each quality in turn—it's de Neche who rescues the heroine from an Oriental fortress guarded by a saber-toothed tiger ("our little Smiley"); but it's Nash who worms his way into the fortress in the first place, by posing as a financial representative of the City.

There are battles and es-

capades, harem beauties (somewhat bowdlerized, as usual, by Avalon's unsubtle hand), monsters, comic Renaissance duellists ("Excuse me, Giacomo, I got business. I come back and kill you after, si?") a magic island, a demon, a talisman, all woven together into a deft, lively narrative. The ending is spoilt by *deus ex machina*, and by an anticlimax which ties up the loose ends in a perfunctory way, but the story is rewarding anyhow. They aren't writing them like this any more.

damon knight will be
back with more reviews
next month



The Last Word

(Yours, of course, Gentle Reader)

SOME READERS have asked whether all letters we receive are published in these columns. The answer is: No. While we assume that letters commenting on this magazine are available for publication, unless the writer specifies otherwise, there just isn't room to run them all. We select those which seem to be of general interest, and usually do not run letters which merely indicate the reader's story preferences in an issue. "The Reckoning" carries the scores.

But whether you're of a mind to write in detail, or just want to rate the stories, we're eager to hear from you; lists of preferences are given just as close attention as prolonged discussion. We want to know how you feel about monthly publication of *Science Fiction Stories*, about our using serials in general, and your reaction to the "Tower of Zanid".

Now, we'll turn the department over to correspondence, starting off with the author of our new serial, who has some background information.

BACKSTAGE NOTES

Dear Bob:

For those of your readers who might be interested, "The Tower of Zanid" takes place in the year 2168, about three (Earthly) decades later than "*The Queen of Zamba*". Like "*The Queen of Zamba*" and "*The Hand of Zei*" this story is laid on Krishna, the most Earth-like, in physical attributes, climate, and inhabitants, of the planets of the star Tau Ceti.

Suggested pronunciations: *Bakh* as (Johann Sebastian) "Bach"; *Balhib* as "bal-heeb"; *Castanhoso* as "kas-tahn-yo-soo"; *dubranec* (Polish for "goodnight") as "doo-brah-nets"; *Getulio Cao* as "zhe-tool-yoo-cow" with the final diphthong nasalized; *Kalwm* as "column"; *Katai-Jhogorai* as "cat-eye jug-o'-rye"; *Kor-daq* as "kor-dock"; *psiakrew* (Polish for "dog's blood") as "pshah-kreff"; *Qais* as "kice"; *Uriiq* as "oor-eeek"; *Zanid* as "zan-eed".

—L. Sprague de Camp

IF IT ISN'T ONE
THING...

Dear Bob:

Nothing but my deep and abiding love for you keeps you from being slaughtered.

In the January 1958 issue of *Original S. F.* you print my parody "Oh, That Lost Sense Of Wonder." My name is spelled correctly on the

parody and in the title page. There are no typographical errors that I have noticed.

But— On the title page, you say "With thanks to William S. Gilbert's 'Yeomen of the Guard'".

Bob, Bob, Bob— How could you? The parody is a takeoff on "*When Britain really ruled the waves*" from the second act of "Iolanthe."

Shame!

—Isaac Asimov

Oh, my offense is rank!

Obviously, at the time I typed that contents page, I was thinking of "Tale of the Pioneer", which *was* based upon "Yeoman of the Guard". However, this is no excuse; so if you will send me a suit of sackcloth and a bucket of ashes by return mail...

Wouldst please specify the source on your mss. in the future? I know you've never failed to note the author, but suspect that you haven't always pin-pointed the particular libretto.

GRAMMER'S RELATIVE

Dear RAWL:

Having just read the correspondence between Dr. Raymond Wallace and yourself, I feel called upon to come to your defense:

First, let me state that I fully agree with both of you that errors in usage, typog-

raphy, etc. are all too common in science-fiction magazines, yours included. But when Dr. Wallace attempts to criticise you on grammatical grounds, he is treading on unfamiliar and, I fear, dangerous territory. I myself know but a very little about English grammar, and cannot pose as any authority; but it is clear even to me that Dr. Wallace knows a great deal about what he thinks is grammar, but next to nothing about grammar. He has learned well what is taught in most schools, what Charles Carpenter Fries calls "...a 'make-believe' correctness which contained some true forms of real 'standard' English and many forms that had and have practically no currency outside the classroom." (C. C. Fries, *American English Grammar*) "So much as" is such a form; the usual and natural form is exactly what

you used, "As much as." "Whom do you want?" is no longer common usage, and is but barely acceptable outside the classroom. As Pogo said, "Meem, that's whom."

"A Grammar book does not attempt to teach people how they ought to speak; but on the contrary, unless it is a very bad or a very old work, it merely states how, as a matter of fact, certain people do speak at the time at which it is written." (H. C. Wyld, *Elementary Lessons in English Grammar*, p. 12) "... The rules of grammar had no value except as statements of facts: whatever is in general use in a language is for that very reason grammatically correct," according to Henry Sweet. (*New English Grammar*, v.1, p. 5) Your editorial was understandable, and therefore at least minimally grammatical. When Dr. Wal-

Looking Ahead...

The June issue of FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION features the first of a new series of science articles on the planets, by ISAAC ASIMOV. Don't miss the opener, "Point of View".

A pair of rabbits once got loose in Australia, and nearly wrecked a continent. But the mouse-like creature that was being brought back to Earth for study was much more dangerous than rabbits. Rabbits rarely bite; the mouse-creature frequently did. And its bite was fatal in twenty seconds. For full details, see "Cargo: Death!" by T. H. Mathieu.

lace says you should have said "a kind of cover" instead of "the right kind of a 'good cover,'" he is offering you a phrase most ill-suited to convey the meaning you intended. I think it would have been better grammatically had you said "a good cover of the right kind," but if that is what you meant, it would have been difficult to convey it using the phrase Dr. Wallace recommends.

Dr. Macklin has now satisfied me that Silverberg's "*Revolt on Alpha C*" contains several errors; a possibility neither of us thought of is brought up in Poul Anderson's story "Brake," in *As-tounding*. If the ship were sufficiently strong, it might float in the upper layers of the atmosphere and never reach the surface.

I am delighted to see that "The Reckoning" is being revived. I must apologise for not getting my ratings in, but I am now working ten hours a day (at least) and don't have much time to read.

How soon will d a m o n knight be back?

—Bret Hooper,
64 Beech Street,
Massena, New York

The purpose of grammatical constructions, which ought to be mentioned now and then, is not to maintain someone's ideas about "pure" style and

language—ideas which are bound to be corrupt according to someone else's standards—but to promote clarity. It's grammatical construction, for example, which makes it possible for the reader or hearer to tell who did what and with which and to whom.

The particular rules that we learned in school, often with considerable discomfort, seem "right" to us; after having suffered much criticism and accusation of sloppiness in speech and writing, or being considered semi-illiterate, we're often not in the mood to be tolerant with others who perpetrate the same offenses. After all, why should they get away with it, when we were slapped down every time?

And, actually, grammatical rules should be more enduring than word-meanings, which change completely, or which proliferate enormously. How many readers of "Hamlet" are aware of the fact that when he says, "I doubt some foul play" he means, "I fear some foul play"; readers and hearers of the period had no such difficulty. But whatever the meaning of individual words, there's a fighting chance of puzzling out what the writer or speaker means if he is using a standard system of arranging them into sentences—grammar.

I may try a pack of Winston's after all, now...

SCORE AN ERROR

Dear Bob:

In all fairness to collectors like myself who keep files of magazines, I believe that a second clarification is necessary with reference to the numbering used by *Future Science Fiction* and *Science Fiction Stories* as given by you in the November issue.

I have transferred the numbering system on paper and several discrepancies exist. You stated that Vol 4 Number 5 of *Future Science Fiction* appeared under the title of *Science Fiction Stories*. My file copy shows Vol 4, No. 5 (Jan 1954) appears under the title of *Future Science Fiction*. By transferring the numbering system of *Future Science Fiction* to the January 1955 (Vol 5 No. 4) issue of

Science Fiction Stories the two one-shot issues of *Science Fiction Stories* belong to another time track. According to your explanation, the last issue of *Future Science Fiction* to appear under a Volume Number was the Oct 1954 issue (Vol. 5 No. 3). The number Vol. 5 No. 4 appeared in the January 1955 issue of *Science Fiction Stories*. That being the case, exactly where do the one shot issues fit. As they were published without any Number at all, please clarify this.

Two other points of information. In conjunction with Gnome Press, we are at present working on an Index of Science Fiction & Fantasy Mags from 1951 through 1957 and possibly 1958. Any assistance from your readers with regards to foreign (English language) mags and pseudonyms would be appreciated.

[Turn Page]

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As for the second point of information, The *Science-Fiction World*, a magazine published by Gnome Press, currently has a regular column by this writer entitled "On S-F Anthologies." We are giving all information gathered on Anthologies. If the response is great enough, an actual Checklist of SF & Fantasy Anthologies will appear. If such a Checklist does appear, it will be in the price range the average fan can afford and not the six dollar price range. For further information and copies of *Science-Fiction World*, we suggest you write to GNOME PRESS, P. O. 161, Hicksville, N. Y.

—Walter R. Cole,
307 Newkirk Ave.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Woe, that an error had to creep into the clarification! "Volume 4 Number 5", of course, should have been "Volume 5 Number 4"—which is the correct identification for the January 1955 issue of *Science Fiction Stories*.

What you can do about the two issues of SFS prior to January 1955, I know not. Perhaps the most sensible thing to do is to consider them as separate anthologies, the second one being listed as Issue Number 2.

A checklist of Fantasy and Science Fiction anthologies sounds like a very good idea. I trust that you intend to list the entire contents of each item, as this is what is sorely needed—more so than merely a list of titles and publication dates.

Disciplined Imagination

(continued from page 53)

such-and-such circumstances, and how the people involved ought to have behaved and felt if it had actually happened. What we call "good fiction" is "true to life" in the sense that *if* such-and-such took place, under the circumstances related, then we can believe that the people the author describes would have said and done and felt what he has told us. ~

IN REALITY, almost any person may react—in word, deed, thought, feeling, etc., or any combination of these factors—within a fairly wide range of possibilities. The reaction which takes place may, at any given instant, depend upon very minute and seemingly irrelevant stimuli. When we say someone's behavior is "illogical" we really mean that it does not ap-

pear to correspond with the "logic" of the situation, or of the person's general manner—behavior and character, or both. The fact is that no one, ever, behaves or reacts illogically; when this appears to be the case, it means that we just do not grasp the logic of the total situation. The "logic" may be hidden from the actor himself—but it is there nonetheless.

But fiction, as William Byron Mowrey states, is fundamentally a marshalling and ordering of emotions, rather than a marshalling and ordering of facts. You can't make a fictional character as seemingly illogical, complex, and unpredictable as a real person; you can rarely even approach this—if you hope to produce a convincing story. After all, most of us know that *we ourselves* are logical, rational, (which therefore means) predictable people;

[Turn Page]

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we always have good reasons for what we do and say and feel—well, anything *important*—well, *usually*...some days we may not be quite ourselves.

But, anyway, we're logical and it's no wonder if we slip once in a while, considering the neurotic, emotional, uncomprehending, unobservant, unfeeling, selfish, self-centered, incompetent, etc., creatures around us.

IN FICTION, the driving motives, the basic fears and hopes and guilts and ideals, the ideal-images, etc., have to be relatively simple; they also have to be known, or deducible to the reader from evidence presented. When we feel that someone in a story is acting "out of character" it may be that we will discover later that we overlooked something that went before; it may be that this will "tie-in" later; but it *may* be that we are entirely right: the author's imaginative discipline was not what it should have been. Whatever precise error he made, the result was a lack of convincingness.

In fiction, the author can make his events to order, although present-day readers require more order in his arrangement than did readers of a century or two back. After all, coincidences *do* happen; the marines or the cops *have*, at times, shown up just in the nick of time. Villains *have* been foiled by unlucky

breaks; they *have* returned to the scene of the crime for no apparent reason except to illustrate an adage. As someone (G. K. Chesterton, I suspect) once noted, the miraculous thing about miracles is that, now and then, they do happen.

These are general requirements for fiction. Whether the level is light entertainment—in which the interest lies in the clever way the author makes things happen without breaking the illusion; literature—in which interpretation of events by characters and the relationships of characters to each other and themselves in event and time is paramount; or "good fiction" which lies between the two, presenting viable characters and relationships in a framework of events which have interest in themselves—whatever range of literacy the author chooses to cover, his imagination must follow a discipline.

THERE ARE two fundamental laws for good science fiction.

1) It must conform to the discipline of fiction in general. No idea, no gadget, no cosmic marvel can atone for a story which does not "convince" because of shoddy plot-structure or unbelievable characters.

2) It must conform to the basic elements of the physical sciences. No amount of

magnificence in plot and character portrayal, and "sense of wonder" can make good science fiction if the story is befouled by the author's ignorance of high school physics, chemistry, biology, etc.

Could a story which violated only the second law be considered a good fantasy, then? I'd say *no* in most instances, because most of such failures come through the author's inadvertence. If the internal evidence shows that the author *thought* he was writing science fiction, but didn't bother to check his plot

and events against elementary science—to see if there were any impossibilities and absurdities *per se*—then he can't plead now that he was really writing fantasy after all. On the other hand, someone like A. Merritt ought not to be criticised on scientific grounds when he most clearly had no aim of writing other than fantasy.

There are additional reasons why much science fiction is not "good fiction", but these vary from story to story; most of the failures violated one or both of the two basic requirements.

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